

The Academy of Religion and Psychical Research

1990 Annual Conference PROCEEDINGS

- EVOLVING
HUMAN NATURE:**
- GLOBAL FREEDOM**
 - KUNDALINI**
 - LIFE AND DEATH**
 - MYTH AND SYMBOL**

**The Academy of Religion and Psychical Research
P. O. Box 614
Bloomfield, Connecticut 06002**

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EVOLVING HUMAN NATURE

PROCEEDINGS

OF THE

ACADEMY OF RELIGION AND PSYCHICAL RESEARCH

FIFTEENTH ANNUAL CONFERENCE

Rosemont College
Rosemont, Pennsylvania

May 20, 1990 to May 22, 1990

STATEMENT OF OWNERSHIP (As filed April, 1991)

The Proceedings of the 1990 Annual Conference of The Academy of Religion and Psychical Research, P.O. Box 614, Bloomfield, CT 06002, an academic affiliate of Spiritual Frontiers Fellowship, International, P.O. Box 7868, Philadelphia, PA 19101. The editor is Mary Carman Rose, Ph.D., 402 Gittings Avenue, Baltimore, MD 21212. The owner is Spiritual Frontiers Fellowship, International, an organization incorporated under the Pennsylvania General Not-For-Profit Corporation Law to conduct business in the State of Pennsylvania (with no stockholders), represented by The Academy of Religion and Psychical Research with a mailing office at Bloomfield, Connecticut.

STATISTICAL DATA	AVERAGE FOR PRECEDING YEAR	SINGLE ISSUE NEAREST FILING
Total copies printed.....	450	300
Paid circulation:		
Sales from office.....	17	3
Mail subscriptions.....	320	231
Total paid subscriptions.....	337	234
Free distribution.....	20	5
Total distribution.....	357	239
Office use, leftover.....	93	61
Total.....	450	300

I certify that the statements made by me above are correct and complete.

Boyce Batey
Executive Secretary

THE ACADEMY OF RELIGION AND PSYCHICAL RESEARCH
Annual Conference Proceedings, 1990

TABLE OF CONTENTS

FOREWORD
page iii

KEYNOTE ADDRESS

INVESTIGATIVE STANDARDS AND THE FUTURE OF ARPR
Mary Carman Rose
page 1

SYMPOSIUM I EVOLVING HUMAN NATURE:
GLOBAL FREEDOM AND KUNDALINI

EVOLUTION IS THE ONLY LAW OF NATURE
Frank G. Pollard
page 13

KUNDALINI AND EVOLVING HUMAN NATURE
Paul Pond and Eileen Holland
page 23

SYMPOSIUM II EVOLVING HUMAN NATURE: LIFE AND DEATH

SPIRIT SURVIVAL OF BODILY DEATH--PRO AND CON:
DATA FROM PSYCHICAL RESEARCH
Frank C. Tribbe
page 36

TO BE OR NOT TO BE
Louis Richard Batzler
page 51

SYMPOSIUM III EVOLVING HUMAN NATURE: MYTH AND SYMBOL

THE NEW AGE MYTH OF SALVATION
Claire G. Walker
page 62

FOREWORD

The Academy of Religion and Psychical Research exists for the purpose of scholarly study of all aspects of the occurrence of psychic phenomena in the great world religions as well as in the spiritual commitments and views of reality and man which are not usually included among the world religions, but which, in fact, have provided foundation for the lives of many individuals. Because of the diversity within this extra-ordinarily extensive and complex area, ARPR as an academic community--ideally--maintains allegiance to a specific approach to the topics for the study of which it exists. I will draw attention to three facets of this approach which I will call "generosity," "appreciation," and "true ecumenism."

Each of these three ideal facets of investigation of the roles of psychic phenomena in our basic commitments (whether or not we call these commitments "religion") also has inherent within it an important set of dualities, while there is one duality which is present in all three. This is the duality implicit in the intellect of the investigator working with his valuational nature. The latter--or the "heart"--(whether it is a "sincere and honest heart" or not), is not identical with the intellect, but usually works with the intellect. Even the ostensible rejection of value-considerations concerning the goals and manner of carrying out research for the sake of achieving a "value-free inquiry" arises from the decision or the (perhaps unexamined) presupposition that in any one situation value-free inquiry is a desideratum. Again, one could despise and reject or welcome and enjoy value-free inquiry. But one would have to be axiologically numb or blind to be indifferent to it. Certainly each of us who works in the area of the psychic and the religious finds that our values as well as our intellect have permanent roles in our inquiry and that this inquiry is not value-free. What, however, of the other dualities present in our inquiry?

There is a duality within generosity which ideally is present in our inquiry because there is the generosity of giving and the generosity of listening, which in this context is the generosity of accepting whatever reports of insights, experiences, convictions, aspirations, and spiritual fulfillment are offered by those whose spiritual paths are different from our own. It is important that any one involved in the study of the psychic and the religious accepts what is offered with respect for and gratitude to the person who offers it.

This brings us to the duality within appreciation. On the one hand, it follows from the nature of generosity that the investigator will not wish to reject what others offer or to dominate or annihilate their spiritual paths. Rather, he will appreciate what he learns from others concerning the psychic and the religious. And if this appreciation does not come spontaneously to him, or does not come easily, he

will try to achieve the capacity for it. On the other hand, however, the investigator must also be appreciative of his own contributions to the inquiry which derive from the spiritual path he walks.

With the introduction of this point, an ancient concept and emphasis are seen to be relevant to all studies of the psychic in its relation to religion. The concept is that of the love of truth, and in particular of the love of the beliefs that one espouses because they guide one's spiritual/intellectual development, aspiration, hopes, and commitments. And the emphasis, which is present (albeit for the most part implicitly) in many Eastern and Western spiritual teachings, is the view that this love of one's personal spiritual path brings with it spiritual and intellectual fulfillment, which is promised in its own way by every spiritual path that is worthy of human commitment. This type of fulfillment, which is born of the love of one's own "salvific" truth, is fundamental to the most probing and complete inquiry, although investigators who do not possess the love of truth also can have important investigative roles, sometimes as the skeptics who, albeit unintentionally, provide the fertile ground in which the views they criticize may grow stronger and clearer.

These comments on the roles of generosity and appreciation in the study of religion and psychism bring us to one of the most important concepts of present day spirituality and religion--that of a true ecumenism. Ecumenism, of course, pertains to the de facto diversity of spiritual paths. And I suggest that a true ecumenism is the attitude that maintains generosity toward and appreciation of the diversity of spiritual paths and beliefs pertaining to reality and man which foster a willingness to serve others and which enable those who walk one of those paths to find their own fulfillment in this service.

But this attitude of true ecumenism is possible only to the person who is deeply committed to and who genuinely tries to live the path that he has chosen as his spiritual home and has done so because at least in part because it nourishes his spirit in the ways of intellectual integrity and good will. The time has come to see beyond spiritual, religious, psychic and mystical exclusiveness and to learn that it is the love of our own perspective on ultimate reality and truth what enables us to comprehend and to love all that genuinely nourishes and inspires the human spirit in whatever spiritual path it is found.

The membership of ARPR mirrors the contemporary great diversity of opinions on topics of psychism and religion, and the six essays which comprise this volume of Proceedings are the expression of the personal convictions and inquiries of the authors. I hope that the diversity of sincere personal statements expressed in these essays and which pertain to a few of the topics which are a matter of considerable controversy among the members of ARPR will have some part to play in the introduction of generosity and

Foreword

appreciation into psychic/religious studies and in the growth of a true and full ecumenism in the last decade of this millennium.

Finally, the important fact of inter-relatedness between psychism and religion and many other areas is apparent in these six essays. Thus, there are (1) an essay having to do with the juxtaposition of fundamental questions of epistemology with the investigative needs of contemporary psychical and religious studies; (2) two essays on evolution, one bringing together views of East and West and the other based in contemporary scientific and cosmological speculation; (3) two essays dealing with death--one concerned with survival per se and the other with the burden (for all concerned) of suicide; and (4) an essay on salvation with an emphasis on peace and social action.

Mary Carman Rose

INVESTIGATIVE STANDARDS AND THE FUTURE OF ARPR

Mary Carman Rose

Beginning with the premise that investigative standards for any one area are not given a priori, the author makes suggestions for standards for work in the area to which ARPR is committed. She stresses the importance of the academic community; of attention to the diversity of known modes of inquiry useful in religious, spiritual, and psychic studies; and five characteristics of personhood which are necessities for investigators in these areas.

THESIS. At the present time those of us who are concerned with the relations between intuition, mysticism, and the psychic, on the one hand, and with religion on the other hand, are necessarily involved in several communities in which there is currently considerable disagreement concerning fruitful modes of inquiry, and hence concerning investigative standards which are derived from these modes of inquiry. This disagreement is none the less important for its being often left implicit and may legitimately be interpreted as grounds for expectation of new developments in our understanding of the nature of inquiry itself and hence for renewed interest in and insight into academic standards. (In what follows I will refer to mysticism, intuition, and the psychic as the paranormal.)

I. SOME NECESSARY COMMENTS ON THE RELATION OF ANY PARTICULAR AREA OF INVESTIGATION TO THE INQUIRING HUMAN MIND. What immediately follows is made necessary because of the frequency with which at ARPR conferences we are told informally that the Heisenberg principle has as corollary "the end of observer science."¹ Despite the importance currently given to the Heisenberg Principle in some scientific observation, perhaps most of us nonetheless spontaneously think of most inquiry as an activity intended to determine in any one area "how things really are":² e.g., the study of gravitation, the various ways in which we as humans find time and space to be related to each other and to the observer, or the blank spaces in the chemical periodic table. This statement is not a truism; nor it is de trop in this context. For it is necessary today to draw attention to permanent ambiguities in the expression "how things really are" in a particular area that we investigate.

A major ambiguity in respect to these issues results from the fact that perennial in both East and West are numerous highly diversified views that in some or perhaps all inquiry what we are to determine includes what we have added to that area: e.g., from early 20th century physics we get the Heisenberg principle, from Theravada Buddhism the concept of "conditioned genesis," from Sankara's Vedantism the concept of "maya," from Humean, Kantian, Heideggerian and other philosophical bases we have several views which tell us that because of our cultural, religious, or idiosyncratic characteristics we differ in our views of reality, and in

this context some are wanting to include psychokinesis and other forms of mind control over reality.³ This is an extremely complex subject. Although according to the Heisenberg Principle, at the subatomic level of nature the presence of an observer has an effect on what is observed, it does not follow that at a molar level of nature there is an analogous effect, or any effects at all, on our observations. In what follows I will take the point of view that the Heisenberg principle does not mean the "end of observer science" at all levels of inquiry and that most of the inquiry in which members of ARPR are interested may safely be fundamentally interpreted as attempts to find out how things really are. I will refer below to some areas in which, however, the observer or investigator perhaps does make a difference in the study of the paranormal but not at all in the sense that nuclear physics helps us to comprehend. This will be something entirely different from the "end of observer science."

II. THE IMPORTANCE IN THIS CONTEXT OF THE CONCEPT OF COMMUNITY. Any inquiry, (and specifically any inquiry into the religious and the paranormal) is carried on within the framework of one or more communities (e.g., the community of sociologists who pursue the "scientific study of religion,"⁴ or the community of parapsychologists); and in large part our concern with investigative standards derives from our desire for membership in or at least good rapport with the communities that maintain standards relevant to our work. In part this is so because if we want our work to be accepted, or at least taken seriously, by our colleagues we cannot ignore their criteria for assessing our inquiry. But on the other hand, in principle any one of us is free to judge a particular set of investigative standards as inadequate for our research. For example, for the study of the paranormal some of us will not want to accept academic standards derived from a behavioristic, materialist, or other naturalistic view of human beings.⁵ The topics relating to the source and nature of the investigative standards which we in ARPR can or should accept are of major importance in this context, for this conference, and for the future of ARPR. For at least five reasons, however, the concept of "community" as it pertains to inquiry is complex.

1. The communities which seek, assess, or appropriate true conclusions are related to inquiry and hence to investigative standards in a number of ways. These are complex issues, and there are intricate relations among the communities. The following is intended only to point out some of the distinctions among communities which it is fruitful to make in this context and to serve as an introduction to the relations among them.

The investigative communities are fundamentally concerned with inquiry. Some of these are committed to the use of a form or forms of empiricism. Others use one or a combination of yogic disciplines--e.g., communities of Hindus, Buddhists, or Taoists. These yogic communities are concerned with inquiry for the sake of achieving religious

truth and establishing and teaching a spiritual path. The yogic inquiries are sometimes suggestive of Western scientific inquiry; but it would be a mistake to identify them with science. Western monotheistic communities are committed to the belief that they have received their religiously significant truth as a divine revelation--i.e., a divine gift. Here inquiry is concerned with determining the meaning of the revelation, its relation to science, yogic inquiries, and philosophy. And there are interdisciplinary communities which combine several approaches to inquiry.

The teaching communities, which appropriate and offer to those who need them the conclusions of the other communities, are engaged in pointing the way spiritually to those who ask for guidance. Some inquiry is involved here because of the necessity to choose among the diverse types of teaching and modes of spiritual development that are offered. While some of these teaching communities are interested in only one spiritual path, others are what may be called ecumenical communities. These have members drawn from several spiritual paths.

I suggest that the concepts of the interdisciplinary community and ecumenical community pertain to both SFFI and ARPR. The concept of the combination of these two types of community is both important and complex. I will develop it to some extent below as it pertains to these two organizations.

2. These communities are made up of sub-communities because of diverse interests, specializations, and commitments among their members; diverse preferences for carrying out approved modes of inquiry; the existence of controversy at the outer limits of inquiry; or diverse spiritual/intellectual preparation for inquiry. In ARPR we have our specialized interests--biofeedback, esotericism, the perennial philosophy and ancient wisdom, mysticism, Christian parapsychology, channeling, etc. Some in ARPR want to progress by compiling personal stories; others by study of physiological and behavioral data; others by combining these approaches; others by tapping the classical accounts of paranormal events as recorded in spiritual traditions. And that we in ARPR have our controversies follows as a corollary from these diversities.

3. Ideally, each of these communities will be recognized as either actually or potentially interdisciplinary. That is, one community may need what another gives, while the latter may try to provide conclusions, data, and concepts for the work of the first. Moreover, we do not know when two areas, which have been interpreted as independent of each other, may be found to be related in this way. Clearly, ARPR is interdisciplinary--e.g., some of us need knowledge of psychological interpretations of man which suggest ways to illumine paranormal events; others need facts as to the extent of current interest in gnosticism or Eastern religions; and others need a great deal of acquaint-

tance with the occurrence of paranormal experiences in the various spiritual paths.

4. Some members of each of these communities need acquaintance with the history of the areas which they study. 5. Some must keep in mind future needs for which that community may be called upon to share responsibility. In respect to 4 and 5, members of ARPR need to be informed about the history of spiritual traditions. For perhaps each of us may be certain that there have been in the past spiritual and/or paranormal insights and experiences of great value which we have never learned about; have forgotten; or have never adequately understood or valued. And within ARPR, those of us who believe that the many dimensions of the paranormal have legitimate and sometimes necessary roles in the spiritual life of some persons must accept responsibility for future effects of our inquiry, teachings, and the spiritual direction we give to others.

III. THE COMMUNITY AS IDEAL SOURCE, PROTECTOR, AND EVALUATOR OF ITS OWN STANDARDS. Any one community provides its own criteria that inquiry carried on by its members has been adequately performed--i.e., it provides its own standards. If I offer the results of my inquiry to any one of the communities with which I am active, then I must be prepared either to justify my conclusions on grounds that are seen as adequate by members of that community or to defend my departure from their investigative demands. And if they choose to reject my work, I may elect for the time being at least to get along without their acceptance; or I may try to persuade them that my insights, concepts, conclusions, data, life-experiences or even aspirations are of no little significance to their research. If I judge that their standards are too loose, narrow, or skewed, then perhaps we cannot work together or we may be able through cooperation and subsequent mutual understanding to harmonize our investigative desiderata and necessities.

Investigative standards, then, are guidelines to protect against error in inquiry and to maximize opportunity for and success in inquiry, for the sake of producing reliable conclusions on which further inquiry as well as committed action may be based. In fact, each stage of an inquiry needs its standards: the conception and articulation of a research project; the selection of adequate concepts for interpretation of data; the decisions as to how and what evidence, insights, historical beliefs, and philosophical pre-suppositions will be selected and used to guide the inquiry; and the decision as to how conclusions will be assessed at the close of inquiry and subsequently in their use in practice.

IV SOME COMMENTS ON THE HISTORY AND PRESENT STATE OF THE DIVERSE COMMUNITIES. It is necessary here to distinguish between the study of an area of inquiry and the study of the modes of inquiry which have proved useful in that area. Also the history of modern Western science is at present our most available and helpful source of knowledge of the development

of a mode of inquiry. For in our day there has been more obvious, widely studied, and publicly recognized development in science than in any other area of inquiry; and hence scientific inquiry offers great opportunity to study the development of a particular mode of inquiry and of its implicit investigative standards. Further, it is now apparent that the several communities mentioned above are rapidly developing interdisciplinary relations with each other and hence what we learn from scientific inquiry concerning investigative standards, the epistemological structure of inquiry, and its modes of development may help us in our comparing and contrasting scientific inquiry with other modes of inquiry.

Science as mode of inquiry. Clearly each scientific inquiry has its own distinctive characteristics. For example, these inquiries differ in respect to the source of the area investigated; the ways in which data are obtained; and the types of equipment used to generate the data. We speak, however, of the scientific method. Are there irreducible differences among the investigations which we call scientific? If so, then in what way does scientific method apply to all of them? On the other hand, is there one scientific method in the sense that there are certain investigative characteristics which are necessary and sufficient to make an inquiry scientific?

Either of these positions could be argued. At this stage in our world-wide involvement in science, and at this conference, we need not, however, choose between them, for given the level and type of epistemological analysis which is appropriate in this context, we may be able to make a list of characteristics which members of the scientific community are likely to require of scientific inquiries into the spiritual, the psychic, and the religious. Thus, such a list of characteristics might include the following: science, as we understand it, investigates only questions pertaining to the physical world and to observable events, entities, and processes that occur within the physical world and concerning which we are able to achieve observations that, properly interpreted, can serve as evidence in our inquiry and support conclusions which we are able to assess by appeal to experience. Further, I think it would be unwise at this point in the history of Western science to develop a firm answer to the question as to whether there is one method of science, because our understanding of science qua method or set of related methods is changing rapidly and we do not know what in future we may learn of the method of science. On the other hand, it may be that eventually we will see the importance, at least for historical reasons, of speaking of one scientific method, because methodological considerations were central in the rise of modern Western science in the 11th century: e.g., science was characterized as the "new method" which, unlike theology and metaphysics, would not only emphasize the study of nature but would be exclusively concerned with investigation of the physical world and, unlike medieval rationalism, would not move from axioms to deductive conclusions but from experience in the

shared, common sense world to inductive and speculative hypotheses.

In the centuries since the rise of modern Western science our scientific study of nature has provided us with many investigative challenges in the meeting of which our understanding of science has implicitly and informally grown. Science is no longer the simple inductive method envisioned by Francis Bacon⁶ and as late as mid-19th century by John Stuart Mill.⁷ In this rapid development of science, however, there has been a danger of loss of clarity, rigor, and commitment to truth seeking in science, all of which are ideally seen as intrinsic to any inquiry and certainly to the study of the paranormal. Further, this danger has sometimes been actualized.⁸

At first, then, the intent was that scientific conclusions would be inductive inferences from sensory observations, which are sometimes called "intersubjective" observations. There are, however, two additional types of inference: deduction and speculation. With the advent of highly precise, widely verified scientific conclusions the hypothesis arrived at by deduction from these precise conclusions became an important aspect of scientific inquiry; and with development of subatomic and relativity physics the deductive hypothesis which could not be decisively verified by appeal to experience also became a feature of legitimate science. On the other hand, the speculative inference is present where there is an object of inquiry concerning which some evidence is available but which cannot be directly observed, e.g., the big bang theory, evolution, or super-psi. The inquiry which eventuates in either a deductive or a speculative hypothesis introduces a new dimension into the understanding of scientific inquiry, while explicit recognition of the need for speculative and deductive as well as inductive hypotheses may legitimately be interpreted as advance in scientific inquiry; in the understanding of the epistemological structure of that inquiry; and in knowledge of the investigative needs of the study of nature. Analogous comments hold of the current informal admission of subjective data pertaining to paranormal experience and individual stories of emotional or religious development which sometimes are used in spirituality studies, psychology, religious studies, and the social sciences to supplement or even supplant sensory data as evidence.

Early in the development of the method of Western science it became apparent that scientific inquiry must be free from dominance of any one metaphysical position. This has been difficult to achieve, however, since the scientific community did not take the necessary steps to insure freedom from such dominance. And as a result individual preferences for particular metaphysical views become extra-scientific features which shape work which is intended to be scientific. Sometimes this happens out of ignorance on the part of the investigator--i.e., such a person does not recognize the metaphysical roles of his presuppositions; or sometimes it happens out of the rigid belief that the metaphysical posi-

tion he accepts is the only true metaphysical position. There is, for example, the scientific inquiry into the human spirit which is shaped by a Marxist or other materialistic or naturalistic metaphysics.⁹

On the other hand, we have now arrived at a state in the development of science where metaphysically grounded views of nature and man are of necessity becoming features of scientific inquiry. This is the case when we attempt to use a scientific or quasi-scientific approach to the study of the human spirit which possesses the quality, concern, and telos achieved through commitment to a particular religious position. An example is Herbert Benson's study of the effects of the practice of Transcendental Meditation on blood pressure.¹⁰ Initially one important possibility in Benson's work was that he might have found observable and, in fact, measurable physiological effects ostensibly resulting within a developing spirituality from the practice of Hindu meditation on what the Hindu sees as the deepest truth which provides nourishment for his very being. The investigative significance of this would be that the Hindu view of reality which, of course, lies outside the purview of scientific inquiry, when appropriated by an individual, may have effects that can be studied scientifically. Benson's work ceased to be significant in precisely this sense when he ultimately concluded that the desirable effects on high blood pressure would result from meditation on virtually any subject. This brings us to a major epistemological problem and challenge for contemporary study of the paranormal: the relation between science and yogic inquiry to which we now turn.

Yogic inquiry. Yogic inquiry is that which is carried on for the sake of spiritual fulfillment and, requiring holistic transformative development of the self (i.e., both intellect and spirit are involved), seeks knowledge of man and reality for the sake of that fulfillment. The motivating goal of this inquiry is the belief that the knowledge necessary to achieve the fundamental peace of the spirit as well as joint fulfillment of the individual's intellectuality and spirituality is a human achievement. The yogas of the Eastern religions and what is sometimes called the "yoga of the West" (which, I suggest, in its most significant form has Platonic roots and is a part of the Western neo-Platonist tradition) illustrate this mode of inquiry.

These disciplines are not science, but modes of inquiry much older than science. Yet their nature is suggestive of that of science and can be illumined by comparison and contrast with science. Thus, both science and the yogic disciplines differ from all rationalisms by eschewing (for fundamental inquiry) deductive inferences from axioms and proceed instead by constant reference to and interpretation of personal experiences. On the other hand, as we have noted, science is limited to investigation of the physical world, while the yogic inquiries probe the very depths of reality as seen from the perspective of the spirituality which produced the spiritual path for the sake of which that particu-

lar form of inquiry was developed. Again, science stresses sensory data and only informally and (and at the present time) without epistemological justification introduces subjective data, while the yogic inquiries stress subjective states of mystical and intuitive experience. And science requires only the power to observe clearly and with integrity while the yogic disciplines require preparation of mind, spirit, and moral nature as each of these is conceived by the spiritual path in question. Finally, so far as contemporary epistemology is concerned, the study of the yogic inquiries has scarcely got under way. Nonetheless, there is ample reason for members of ARPR to study the paranormal in relation to the spiritual commitment of any one path; to seek differences and resemblances among the features of all or a selection of the yogic inquiries; and to compare and contrast these features of the yogic inquiries with those of the monotheistic communities to which we now turn.

Western Monotheisms. Of the three Western monotheisms (Judaism, Christianity, and Islam) I will discuss only Christianity, which is at present a highly diversified community. For example, many who at present call themselves Christians interpret all Christian beliefs as being human achievements; and thus they comprise a separate aspect of contemporary development of yogic inquiry.¹¹ But among Christians some continue to believe that the Christian spiritually significant truth--i.e., the "salvific" truth--is a divine revelation, a gift to man of what the human mind could not itself find. I do not know what percentage of Christians continue to accept Christian teachings as a divine gift, but the position has not disappeared; and one finds acceptance of it not only among the traditional Christians but also among the liberal Christians who are eager to introduce some changes into Christianity.¹² When we survey the religious communities within which paranormal phenomena occur and which will benefit from some inquiry into the de facto content and spiritual roles of the paranormal, we will find much of value among the Christians who interpret their teachings as divine revelation.

"Faith" is the name ordinarily given to the epistemological structure of the acceptance of the Christian revelation. And the nature of this faith, including the roles in faith of the Christian's will, commitment, capacities for love, and intellect within the achievement and sustaining of faith, currently are major topics for inquiry. Among the Christians who look upon their teachings as a divine gift, considerable inquiry is carried on which is by no means of small value within religious studies and specifically for ARPR. Thus, there is inquiry concerning the history of interpretation of the divine revelation; the philosophical handmaid of the theologian who codifies and interprets the revelation; and the types of spirituality to which the acceptance of these teachings leads.

Individuals and groups occupied with teaching and giving advice concerning the roles of the paranormal in religion at the present time. In respect to the providing of in-

struction, spiritual direction, and therapy for those concerned in any way with the actual or potential roles of the paranormal in their lives, there are many individuals who work alone, but also no lack of those who work with groups. Yet in any case, the many individuals who are occupied with these tasks do not constitute a community; and although they are accomplishing important work for some individuals to whom they minister and although it is rewarding to study them, it is fruitful to study them in terms of their individual techniques and teachings. Further, there is widespread difference of opinion in respect to virtually all aspects of this work.

For members of ARPR this is obviously a very important area. Our existence as Academy derives in part from the fact that each religion has included the paranormal, perhaps having had its very origin in some types of paranormal phenomena, while many individuals have chosen their own spiritual commitment and sustained and developed it through their paranormal experiences. This is no fringe concern of ours; it is part of what is at the very center of the concern of ARPR. Among projects for members of ARPR to work on are the study of the (currently wide-spread and encouraged) desire for "psychic development" and of the situations in which such development is offered; the characteristics and training which are desiderata or necessities in the person who "directs" the spiritual development of another; criteria of a fruitful attitude toward the paranormal in one's spiritual life; and the roles of the investigator's personal involvement in the paranormal in his inquiry.

In respect to these areas at present there are problems, and both communities and individuals, whether teachers, investigators or pupils, need direction. Because the area is very controversial and fragmented, it is not easy at present to give examples, for even choosing an example may only add to the controversy. I will, however, venture to give here four generalizations concerning these problems: (1) There are the deleterious effects of some of the concerns with intuition, psychic development, etc. on the individual's critical faculties and powers of reflection as well as on his spirituality; (2) There is the presence of misinformation and ignorance in the instruction that is offered; (3) There is sometimes the too easy identification, interpretation, and/or assessment of possible psychic phenomena within the individual's spiritual life; and (4) There is the giving a wrong emphasis and role to paranormal phenomena.

INVESTIGATIVE STANDARDS AND THE FUTURE OF ARPR. What does the foregoing suggest in respect to present academic standards for members of ARPR? I will answer this question in terms of five characteristics of personhood which are desiderata for those who inquire into the relations between the paranormal and the religious.

IMAGINATION is necessary in at least three ways. (a) The investigator must have knowledge of the history of the modes of inquiry which I mentioned above. He must possess

this knowledge in such a way that he is constantly aware of the fact that all modes of inquiry are contrived by gifted and creative, but also fallible and limited, human beings. He must also have knowledge of the historical and current disagreements in all the communities we have looked at, so that, whatever his preference for inquiry, he will be able to glimpse the possibility that he can learn from his colleagues whose yogic, scientific, or fideistic inquiries are different from his.

(b) He needs to be able to think creatively and responsibly about the present-day requirements and desiderata of inquiry--e.g., about how subjective data and individual "stories" need to be incorporated into some scientific inquiry and about how aspects of the human spirit which have been shaped by a particular fundamental view of reality (e.g., Zen or Theravada Buddhism or orthodox Judaism and Christianity) can be appropriated for non-reductive study within science. At present these steps are often taken informally and even unreflectively. We have not shown the legitimacy of this step with the result that our inquiries are often vulnerable, their investigative soundness not being established.

(c) The investigator needs to be able to envisage other possible ways of experiencing the phenomena he studies besides the ones he is acquainted with or interested in. Given the great diversity among the ways in which intuition, mysticism, psychism, commitment, and belief are combined in the great religious traditions, the individual without imagination to conceive and to value spiritual commitments, loves, needs, and satisfactions of needs which he does not share will be at a disadvantage.

OPENNESS must accompany imagination. For an investigator may be able to imagine individuals whose spiritual needs and satisfactions are different from his, but he needs openness to realize their very concrete presence now and the importance of this presence in his work.

COMMITMENT. But in the investigator's preparation for his work, his openness and imagination also need commitment to his serving the needs of others and his fostering the spiritual truths and principles that nourish the spirit wherever they are found. If I am committed to serving only my personal ambition, my perspective on the human spirit, or my own truth then I might use my imagination and my openness to come to know and subsequently destroy what is different from my spiritual preferences. We who work with the paranormal needs of the spiritual life need to remember and willingly foster the de facto diversity of all that these words name. Each of us needs to be committed to the study and fostering of much that is outside of our own personal lives, interests, spiritual needs, and aspirations. And we need to remember, and at times even emphasize, that in this commitment we must often explicitly use our free will to become interested in much of that in which we do not take a spontaneous interest or what we currently judge only in

terms of the past mistakes, limitations, false starts, or the past or present errors of some who have worked with this material.

But in respect to what our imagination brings into our minds, our openness discerns, and our commitment wishes to serve the investigator must with accuracy and patient scholarship and observation probe deeply. This means a deep thrust to identify the presuppositions and personal preferences which shape our inquiry and to comprehend those which shape the inquiry of our colleagues. Thus, for some the inquiry into the religious and the paranormal is shaped by a personal preference for the seeking of enlightenment, freedom to explore and to aspire as one wishes, and non-attachment to other creatures, including one's teacher. But irreducibly different from this is another goal in which the emphasis is on love of God and his creatures; on obedience as essential to spiritual development; on the gift of grace as the necessary source of that development; and on the hope for eternity-in-community where spiritual eros is fulfilled in agape in an ever-lasting close relation with God and his creatures.

Perhaps for my personal commitment I can successfully choose one of these without being well acquainted with the other. But I cannot fulfill my commitment to inquiry into the spiritual and the paranormal without examining both, and any other possibilities I have a chance to study. For any spiritual paths may include the paranormal, and if I am a student of the spiritual and the paranormal then I must know as much as possible of the complete story of human spirituality and of the roles of the paranormal in it.

¹Scientific Thought: 1900-1960, ed. by R. Harre. London, Eng.: Oxford University Press, 1969. pp. 72-74

²Charles S. Peirce, "The Fixation of Belief." Popular Science Monthly: Nov., 1877. Reprinted in Collected Papers of Charles Sanders Peirce, ed. by Charles Hartshorne and Paul Weiss. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1934. Vol. V.

³Robert O. Jahn and Brenda J. Dunne, Margins of Reality: The Role of Consciousness in the Physical World. New York, NY: Harcourt, Brace, Jovanovich, 1987.

⁴The Journal of the Scientific Study of Religion and Review of Religious Research provide, albeit implicitly, many examples of the problems involved in the endeavor to use contemporary forms of empiricism in the study of the various aspects of religion.

⁵For a materialist study of the human spirit and for the investigative standards and goals which derive from this perspective see Otto Maduro, Religion and Social Conflicts (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1982). Also, for a materialist interpretation of Indian thought, see Dale Riepe, Objectivity and Subjectivism in the Philosophy of Science with Special Reference to India Calcutta, India: K.P. Bagchi, 1986.

⁶Francis Bacon, Novum Organum. First published in 1620.

⁷John Stuart Mill, Systems of Logic. First published in 1843.

⁸Otto Maduro, Op. Cit.

⁹Richard J. Bernstein, Beyond Objectivism and Relativism. Philadelphia, PA: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1988. Also, by the same author: Philosophical Profiles. Philadelphia, PA: University of Pennsylvania, 1986.

¹⁰Herbert Benson, The Relaxation Response. New York, NY: Avon, 1976. H.H. Bloomfield, Michael Peter Cain, Dennis Jaffe, and Robert Kory, TM: Discovering Inner Energy and Overcoming Stress. New York, NY: Delacorte, 1975.

¹¹Mary Carman Rose, "Christianity and Revisionist Theology." Priests and People, Vol. 3, Number 10.

¹²Leo J. O'Donovan and T. Howland Sanks, Faithful Witness. New York, NY: Crossroad, 1989.

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selection pressure whatsoever."³ Negentropy is a fundamental sub-process of evolution independent of organic life forms.

BIOLOGICAL EVOLUTION. The physical, chemical, and electrical properties of all living things can be defined in evolutionary terms. We must realize that scientific knowledge is doubling about every 5 or 6 years, and tremendous progress has been made since Darwin's time. A few philosophers and authors such as J. Eisenbud⁴ and Willis Harman⁵ may still be trying to find a place for teleology in living things.

Religious and philosophical opponents once put great store in the idea of "a missing link" in human evolution. Now that geneticists have shown that humans and chimpanzees share 98% of their genetic inheritance, this argument has lost its favor. Those who talk of the "mysterious evolution of the eye"⁶ which puzzled Darwin, have not yet read Dawkins who devoted parts of two chapters to this subject.⁷

While theories of the evolution of the eye were still to be elaborated after Darwin, we can see that this is comparatively simple in comparison to the evolution of those ancient lizards who become warm-blooded, developed hollow bones, grew feathers from scales and learned to fly. They simply followed the only law of nature: they evolved. Lizards can actively extract energy from their universe only when the surroundings are warm. They can travel only short distances to find better surroundings. Warm blooded birds are much more negentropic.

Negentropy, as was mentioned earlier, is the ability of living creatures to extract energy from a universe which is running down--or, as the physicists say--the entropy of the universe is increasing. The other major sub-processes of evolution, of increasing complexity, and increasing diversity are obvious in the lizard-bird transition

To return to the philosophical concept of teleology or "purpose" in the universe, it isn't that scientists deny it on the basis of the evidence. The fact is that natural, physical, electrical, chemical, and biochemical explanations are, so far, adequate to explain what the scientists have evidence of. The scientific paradigm has, as yet, no need for supernatural explanations.

The scientific paradigm can be defined as that body of concepts, perceptions, values, and practices that have been subjected to sufficient scrutiny, peer review, experimental confirmation, and cross-discipline confirmation to constitute common belief systems on which the community bases its social organization. As the scientific paradigm goes, so goes the world view. Political and religious leaders can come and go; but the scientists seem to have a lock on credibility. Agree with the scientific view and the world agrees with you. Disagree and you stand alone. Those of us who would like to bring spiritual concepts into the world

Evolution is the Only Law of Nature

view must integrate our concepts with the scientific paradigm. Other wise we are all just taking in each others' washing.

The scientific paradigm is changing and so is the world view. The scientific paradigm is in some ways approaching spiritual concepts. The "oneness" of the universe is a recent "discovery" of the physicists. Faith healing has been "legitimatized" as Therapeutic Touch. Environmental and psychological changes are recognized as causes for changes in brain chemistry. Mental and physical diseases have their brain chemistry co-relations. These changes are rapidly becoming the current scientific paradigm.

On the forefront of biological research, and not yet accepted by all mainline scientists, is the overriding value of cooperation versus competition. This may be "old hat" to theologians but theologians have limited impact on the world view.

COOPERATION AS A SUB-PROCESS OF EVOLUTION. To begin at the beginning we must remember with Margulis that 80% of our evolutionary history is in the microbial stage.⁸ Our genes go back that far. Our genetic ancestors lived at the microbial level in a "dog-eat-dog" environment that is the traditional view of nature.

These cells got their energy from a fermentation process. They could absorb through their outer membranes, and digest other nutrient or living cells in their universe. They could also be invaded by predators which could pierce their outer shells and eat them from the inside out. One predator, like Professor Henry Hill in "Music Man," found the environment inside so good it couldn't leave. It could live on the products of fermentation and produce ATP which makes muscles operate. The new cooperative symbiotic cell acquired an increased ability to take energy from the environment. Its negentropy increased. The predator is recognizable in the human cell today. It has its own DNA and some disease susceptibility can be inherited via the mitochondria--but only through the mothers. Now we have quadrillions of cells cooperating in our body.

The astronomers like Galileo knocked man from his arrogance as the center of the universe. The evolutionary biologists are adding reality to injury. The most predominant species on earth (in terms of mass) is not man or even all mammals. The total weight of social insects is 7 times that of all the mammals put together.⁹

The wheel has been found in a micro-organism which uses it as a method of propulsion like a propeller.¹⁰ Man did not invent the wheel. He reinvented it. The first nuclear reaction was initiated by a microorganism that concentrated plutonium from ores. Man is not the only organism capable of changing the environment on a grand scale. Bacteria converted the entire atmosphere of the planet from carbon dioxide to oxygen.

The species that can tolerate the harshest environment and draw its substance therefrom is not man. Some sulfur-eating bacteria live at temperatures near 212 degrees F. Man dies at an internal body temperature of 106 F. At the other extreme, only the lichen can proliferate at Arctic temperatures. The lichen is a co-evolved symbiosis between a fungus and an alga. Shortly after Darwin, the lion was recognized as the lord of the jungle and the eagle as the lord of the skies. These "superior" entities were taken as symbols for nations such as the British Empire and the United States of America. Now they are, or almost are, recognized as endangered species. The cooperative species are recognized as having greater survival value than the best competitors.

Man with his many quadrillion cells of varying species may or may not have as great survival prospects as the termite.

Anthropologist Richard Leakey has stated on television that man-to-man violence started only about 10,000 years ago.¹¹ Until that time he contends that cooperation was the rule for millions of years. War is not genetic. It is culturally based. Concepts such as these by Leakey, Margulis, and Dawkins may be fast becoming part of the scientific paradigm. If so, we can expect that evolution will take them from required reading at the undergraduate level to the sixth-grade textbooks in the next few years. The value of cooperation versus competition will be an acquired belief-system for future generations.

EVOLUTION AND RELIGION. Religion is not exempt from the process of evolution. From animism to monotheism and perhaps back again, we see the process of increasing complexity. Diversity we see in profusion of Christian, Islamic, and all 600 Buddhist sects. Each level of organization produces something fundamentally new. The more we recognize diversity, the more we recognize the underlying unity.

Aspects of the old religion live on in the new, the symbols, the rituals and the concepts. These live on just as the DNA and RNA have lived on in many forms from microbe to plants, animals, and man. The underlying unity in religions is akin to the "oneness" of all living things. The perennial wisdom and the power of prayer are pervasive.

We see new species being formed today. The megachurches with up to 90 activity groups and Easter attendance of 25,000 are not the same as the TV ministries. The Cargo Cult of the South Pacific in World War II was and still is a religion.¹² Brazil's Candomblé is a new religion which is a mixture of Catholicism, spiritualism, and African tribal beliefs. Is this an omen of synthesis in religious thought?¹³

If progress in the search for truth follows the process of thesis, antithesis, and synthesis then it seems we have

Evolution is the Only Law of Nature

suffered long in the stages of thesis and antithesis. A synthesis could be expected to have a positive effect on reducing wars and other conflicts.

The current factors that may be working toward a Synthesis of Religious Thought were outlined by the writer in the SFFI Newsletter for May, 1989.¹⁴ This synthesis in evolutionary terms is called "co-evolution." It is similar to the lichen which evolved from two separate species: an alga and a fungus. The antagonists of old became the cooperators in the new.

Dipping into the future, William M. Thompson, associate professor of theology at Duquesne University, predicts:

...the devout Christian of the future will either be a "mystic," one who has "experienced" something or he will cease to be anything at all."¹⁵

Biologist Rupert Sheldrake takes the view "that God is in some sense evolving with the natural world" and that "God's mind must change as the universe evolves." Joseph Campbell, who thought of religions as myths, saw a need for new planetary myth to replace the religious and nationalistic myths which have influenced our lives in too many negative ways. The New Theology currently evolving seems real but the elements are yet to be defined.

EVOLUTION OF THE CONCEPT OF THE SUPERNATURAL. Just as religion has evolved, so have our concepts of the supernatural. Some primitive peoples made no distinction between the natural and the supernatural. They couldn't do so. Primitive tribes in Australia today make only one distinction--that which happens in dream time and that which happens in ordinary time.

We see a diversity of the meaning of the supernatural in scores of species of experience to which we have given such names as ESP, clairvoyance, dowsing, telepathy, and mediumship. The complexity of each of these species has evolved to the state where many volumes have been written on each of them.

Co-evolution of religion and our concepts of the supernatural has not always been one of cooperation as attested by the Council of Nicea in 325 A.D., the Inquisitions of the 13th century, and the last burning of a witch in this country a scant 200 years ago. This hopefully is changing as William M. Thompson suggested.¹⁶

The co-evolution of our concepts of the supernatural with scientific progress has been proceeding apace. ESP was used as an archeological tool as early as 1908 according to Schwartz.¹⁷ Random number generators and a variety of feedback loops are in use by parapsychology experimenters today. Persinger has related the influence of the earth's geomagnetic field to psychic events.¹⁸

In the field of mental health Jungian psychiatrist R. Woolger, without hypnosis, uses past-life regression to improve the health of his clients.¹⁹ Native American Indians have relied on "the sacred mushroom" or vision quests to tap the spirit world. Now chemists have developed a host of psychedelic drugs, and sensory deprivation can be used in flotation tanks. Richard Feynman, the physicist who invented chromodynamics after an out-of-the-body experience in a flotation tank, reported afterwards, "I didn't see NO laws of physics violated."²⁰ Some of the other aids to viewing the supernatural are described by Michael Hutchison in Mega-brain. Meditation tapes to enable one to contact spirit guides, or whatever, is a multibillion dollar business.²¹

In Vibrational Medicine physician Richard Gerber delves deeply into chakras, etheric bodies, and acupuncture meridians to obtain an overview of the mind/body/spirit connections.²² Robert O. Becker, M.D., believes psychic ability and regeneration of body organs may go together.²³ The neurobiologists working on the brain/mind interface are occasionally finding new truths in psychic events.

J.C. Calloway reported that the visions of dream sleep may be activated by psychedelic substances produced in the pineal gland.²⁴ An article in the International Journal of Neuroscience reported evidence of brain-wave synchrony when pairs of individuals were "attempting to feel each others presence." The word "telepathy" was not mentioned in the review of Brain/Mind Bulletin but quoted the authors as proposing that "neural fields [of different persons] can interact and alter each other."²⁵

Physicist Gertrude Rauschner summarized this coevolution well in her comment that "we can not only demonstrate that psychic phenomena and the laws and content of physics are compatible with PSI functioning, but that we can use physics principles to help us understand PSI phenomena and that the psychic data base will shed light on some of the current problems in physics."²⁶

THE EVOLUTION OF MYTHS. Myths are evolving, and we are creating myths all the time. The Loch Ness Monster in Scotland, the Abominable Snowman in Tibet and Bigfoot in Tennessee are just some of our current myths to replace fire-breathing dragons and unicorns. They are larger versions of the fisherman's tale of the one that got away. And therein may lie the origin of myths from which all myths have evolved.

When early protoman descended from the trees or began living in caves, the hunting party probably originated before human speech. When the hunters returned, they had an experience to share. How they shared it, with gestures for hills, forest, streams, flying pests, dangerous carnivores, and other hazards on the way to their finding food, is a matter of conjecture. They did eventually do just this with or without speech. The dramatization of their journey became a story. Stories of past journeys would become elaborated

Evolution is the Only Law of Nature

on, re-told, monsters exaggerated and hazards magnified to make a better story. Such stories, if made more interesting, become myths. All myths of journeys, such as odysseys and the Search for the Holy Grail, derive from such humble beginnings.

Evolution produces a diversity of species. What would naturally follow when the journey-tale had been well-worked over? To make a story you need people and the environment, friends and foes, hazards that can be fires, floods, monsters, fiery volcanos, and mysterious things that go bump in the night. The fish that got away grows bigger in each retelling. The flood that almost destroyed the tribe becomes one that covered the whole world. Atlantis and Lemuria remain as myths of this extrapolation. The seldom-seen great beasts become fire-breathing dragons. In evolutionary time it was only a moment ago when St. George slew the last dragon. Bigfoot, Nessie, and Yeti live on.

You can only make so many stories out of people and the environment before the question arises: Where did the people and the environment come from? Each culture has developed its own creation myth. The fact that they do not agree helps define them as myths. Agreement would define them as consensus reality such as death and taxes and the pollution of the environment. One tribe's creation myth is another tribe's heresy. The heresy of today may be the religion of tomorrow.

The driving force of myths (besides entertainment) is the need for the story-teller or myth preserver to justify his actions and his belief systems. At the primitive level the unsuccessful hunter or fisherman would point out that there are powers out there beyond our control, and that we alone are not responsible for the food supply or for the human race.

There is a great need for humans to dump their ineffectuality on someone or something else. Myths which can absolve people from their guilt feelings have great survival value. Beliefs in Atlantis, astrology, and UFO's all fill this need. The original hunters went out for food and originated the first myth. Now we need intellectual, spiritual, and emotional foods. Myths satisfy that need.

Myths can also boost self-esteem, singly or in groups. Myths can increase one's feeling of security. "I am not alone, I have support from family, tribe, nation, ethnic group, and we are better than they are."

Myths can provide an outlet for hate. Myths can convince insecure people that their lives have cosmic meaning, and that they have heavenly help. Myths have a negative side, too. They can help individuals come to power and maintain control over masses of people.

Myths may have reached a pinnacle of complexity in ancient Greece when they had a separate god or goddess for

each human vice or virtue. The diversity from one ethnic group to another may seem to be unique or discrete entities. Their underlying unity is apparent in their evolution from a primitive source and their ability to meet human needs.

Myths, like other living entities, grow old and die. On the way, they lose their ability to influence social customs and lifestyles. Joseph Campbell, in his television series, whimsically pointed this out when he sang in the tune of "That Old Time Religion":

It was good for Zarathustra
Though he isn't what he useta.

and

It was good for Aphrodite
Though she seldom wore a nightie.

Humanity has evolved to the stage where we can see our situation in global terms. We have, however, no sustained global myth. That which we need has not yet evolved.

New myths are evolving, however. James Lovelock's Gaia hypothesis is a case in point. His original thesis was of Mother Earth as a living, purposeful entity. Humanity has evolved into a much more analytic and critical entity than in days of yore. Lovelock's hypothesis was criticized on a number of grounds. The biosphere is really only just a thin skin on the planet, about as large as the film of moisture on a grapefruit. The rest of the planet is unaffected. Until Gaia can colonize Venus or Mars, it is not reproducing itself as another living entity. Lovelock had to give up his concept of purpose, and Gaia lost much of its supernatural appeal.

The deep need for a global myth may manifest itself now in the desire to colonize other planets even though the value of these planets as habitations is less than the value of the ocean floor. Even as scientific stations they may be of lesser value than unmanned space probes for many years.

A NEW MYTH IN THE MAKING. If we need a new myth, then we shall have one--possibly within the lifetime of people now living. It may evolve so gradually that we do not recognize it as a discrete entity. It may be evolving at the present time. Some of the elements that may become part of this new myth could be the following:

1. A growing sense of global interdependence and a planetary consciousness.
2. The science-supported view that cooperation is a major evolutionary trait in mankind.
3. A recognition that the perennial wisdom and other commonalities underlie all major religions.

Evolution is the Only Law of Nature

4. A belief in re-incarnation.

5. An extrapolation from Rupert Sheldrake's morphogenic fields" to the idea of the creation of souls.

6. New discoveries on the interface between science and metaphysics.

These are, of course, just speculations. As a final speculation we have the from The Notebooks of Paul Brunton:

"Spirit has evolved into matter and is evolving back into self-knowledge. Spirit we can define as an energy field."

¹Steven Weinberg, The First Three Minutes. New York, NY: Bantam, 1984

²Ilya Prigogne in The Looking Glass Universe by J.P. Briggs and David F. Peat. New York, NY: Cornerstone Library, 1984.

³Artificial Life. Conference held Feb., 1990 in Santa Fe, NM. Reported in Science (AAAS), Mar. 30, 1990. P. 1543

⁴J. Eisenbud, Paranormal Foreknowledge. New York, NY: Human Science Press, 1982

⁵W. Harman in a paper read to the 1988 International Transpersonal Conference. Santa Rosa, CA

⁶John Polkinghorne, Science and Creation. Boston, MA: Shambhala, 1989

⁷Richard Dawkins, The Blind Watch Maker. New York, W>W> Norton, 1986

⁸Lyn Margulis and Darian Sagan, The Microcosmos. New York, NY: Summitt Boosk, 1986

⁹E.O. Wilson in Science, Nov. 10, 1989. p. 754

¹⁰Margulis and Sagan, Ibid.

¹¹Richard Leakey on Public Broadcasting System, Jan. 2, 1990.

¹²"Megachurches". Detroit News, April, 1990

¹³"Candoble". Detroit Free Press, July 15, 1990

¹⁴Frank Pollard, "A Systhesis in Religious Thought." SFFI Newsletter. May 1989

¹⁵William M. Thompson, Fire and Light. Mayway, NJ: Paulist Press, 1988. p. 183

¹⁶Thompson, Ibid.

¹⁷Stephan J. Schwartz, The Secret Vaults of Time. New York, NY: Gorsset and Dunlap. 1978

¹⁸Michael Persinger in The Journal of the American Society for Psychical Research. July, 1988. pp. 217-225

¹⁹Roger Woolger, Other Lives, Other Selves. New York. NY: Doubleday, 1987

²⁰Richard Feynman in Perfect Symmetry by Heinz Pagel. London, Eng.: Joseph, 1985

²¹Michael Hutchison, Megabrain. New York, NY: Ballantine, 1986

²²Richard Gerber, Vibrational Medicine. Santa Fe, MN: Bear and Co., 1988

²³Robert O. Becker and Gary Selden, The Body Electric Electromagnetism and the Foundation of Life. New York, NY: William Morrow, 1985

²⁴J. C. Calloway, "Medical Hypotheses" reported in Brain/Mind Bull., Feb. 1989

²⁵Brain/Mind Bull., July 1988

²⁶Gertrude Rauscher, "The Physics of PSI Phenomena in Space and Time." in Psi Research, June 1983.

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KUNDALINI AND EVOLVING HUMAN NATURE

Paul Pond and Eileen Holland

The authors examine various theories of evolution, attempting to show that biological and spiritual evolution are not necessarily incompatible. Many theories allude to an inner urge propelling man, in particular, forward and upward. The authors suggest that this "urge" is consistent with the concept of kundalini, which holds that there is a biological transformation effected through a rejuvenated activity of the reproductive system, which then refines the nervous system and the genes.

I. Introduction. In scientific circles, evolution, including that of the human race, stands an established fact. Yet the driving force or "how" of this evolutionary process remains empirically unsolved. It is this "how" that is not satisfactorily explained by the currently accepted theory of evolution. To say that man's rise from the animal kingdom was due to random mutations and "natural selection" still provides no answer. John White has expressed the viewpoint of many scientists and scholars of the 19th and 20th centuries: "The grand theme of history is the evolution of consciousness--a story of ever more complex forms of life coming into physical being in order to express more fully the consciousness behind existence itself."¹

The currently held theory of evolution, a synthesis of Darwin's theory and genetics, has nothing to say about consciousness. Yet the most highly evolved of creatures is distinguished from other animals more by its consciousness than its physical attributes. Further, current evolutionary theory has nothing to say about the goal or direction of human evolution. It lacks the predictive power required of "good" scientific theories.

The shortcomings of Darwinism aside, it seems to be the best we have so far. But there are other perspectives on how our world and species came into being. Many of these have religious underpinnings and, if taken literally, share no common ground with other scientific approaches. For example, creationist type theories explain away the "how" of evolution by saying a spiritual God outside this world brought the whole of creation into being from nothing in a few "days." Some form of this view was held by natural science into the 18th century. Today this view conflicts with fossil and other scientific evidence. To say the least, the creationist view appears as an over-simplification to the empirical scientist.

In the extreme we have two points of view--scientific and religious. The scientific ignores consciousness, ascribes human advance in evolution to random mutation and same "magical" missing link, and has nothing to say about our future. The religious view that we accept things on

faith alone is inconsistent with empirical evidence, and does not explain "how" we evolved. It relies on knowledge available from subjective states of consciousness, and the interpretation over time of ancient scripture handed down by those claiming "mystical experience."

In the present work we will focus on the evolution of human consciousness; for it is our consciousness that differentiates us and makes us human. This process has not been satisfactorily explained by either science or religion, although both have elements of appeal. Science gives us verification by appeal to evidence, while religion gives us the comforting idea of an intelligence and purpose behind creation.

Present day science has no clearly defined way to study subjective states of consciousness such as those experienced by the mystic or genius. We believe that the study of kundalini offers a way of bridging the objectivity gap between empirical science and the variety of historical spiritual experience. We will be able to develop a better understanding of how our human nature evolved. Consequently the gulf between science and religion can be reduced; and combining these now disparate disciplines can help propel the human race to its evolutionary destiny.

II. Evolution: Ideas and Theories. We will begin by outlining various ideas on the evolution of human nature. Within this framework our purpose is to review the highlights of these concepts. We find that the general trend of ideas concerning the evolution of man is more than materialistic. Even since Darwin's time, it has been attributed to some unknown or unknowable driving force.

Darwin was not the lone 19th century proponent of the continuous evolution of living beings, although his theory has been the most empirically satisfying so far. On the Origin of Species contained three important aspects: it recognized evolution as a fact; presented data intended to support evolution; and developed a theory of the way evolution took place.² Darwin took it as fact that all organisms exhibit variability and reproduce many more offspring than survive. He concluded that the environment "selects" those individuals best suited to survive (natural selection) and that the characteristics favored by natural selection are passed on to the next generation. The question as to how these characteristics were passed on was left to Mendel to describe in his work on heredity. The concepts of natural selection and heredity have been combined to form the generally accepted theory of evolution in use today. Although this synthetic theory reasonably described the material aspect of the evolutionary process, it has nothing to say about how humans developed and in what way they could be developing. The qualities of morality and ethics--those that make us "human"--are excluded from our currently accepted theory. In addition, the theory seems to describe where we have been but does not tell us where we are going. It has nothing to say about the future of the human race.

The concept of the continuous evolution of living beings apparently dates back to Lucretius and classical times. The idea was mentioned in the 17th and 18th centuries by Spinoza and Leibniz and in 1790 by Kant. Among the first scientists to propose an evolutionary-type theory was Louis Moreau de Maupertuis in his System de la Nature (1751). In fact, de Maupertuis anticipated the concept of natural selection in his Essai de Cosmologie:

In the fortuitous combination of the products of nature... only those with certain adaptive relationships could survive... and the species we see today are only the smallest part of those which a blind destiny produced.³

In 1809 Jean Baptiste Lamarck published his views on evolution in Philosophie Zoologique. Lamarck's theory consisted of two main points. The first is that new structures appear in organisms because of an "inner want." The second is that these new structures are acquired in response to need and then inherited by later generations. While Lamarck's hypothesis seemed reasonable at the time, it failed to overcome several objections. For example, there was no known way by which somatic cells pass characteristics on to reproductive cells, and the inheritance of acquired characteristics has not been generally validated by experiment. Lamarck seemed to have good insight into the concept of evolution but not the theory to explain it.⁴ It should be noted that Lamarck tried to explain one of Darwin's observed facts--i.e., the variability within species. This would be like trying to explain why the speed of light is constant.

Alfred Russell Wallace, a contemporary of Darwin, independently developed a similar theory of evolution based on natural selection and "survival of the fittest." Darwin won public recognition with his masterly presentation and enormous body of facts in support of his theory. In 1864 Wallace wrote about a fundamental change in the nature of the evolutionary process as it related to the evolution of man. He appears to be one of the first to realize that a fundamental change had taken place in the nature of the evolutionary process with the coming of man. In the second volume of his autobiography, My Life, Wallace sums up the difference between Darwin's view and his own. Darwin's concept was that there was no difference in kind between man's nature and animal nature, only a difference in degree. Wallace's view was:

...that there is a difference in kind, intellectually and morally, between man and other animals; and while his body was undoubtedly developed by the continuous modification of some ancestral animal form, some different agency, analogous to that which first produced organic life and the originated consciousness, came into play in order to develop the higher intellectual and spiritual nature of man.⁵

It is the concept of this "agency" related to man's intellectual, moral and spiritual development that we will come back to later.

The French philosopher Henri Bergson proposed that the source of ultimate reality was 'elan vital' (vital impulse) and that this reality can be grasped only by metaphysical intuition. In his Creative Evolution he treats "evolution as a continuous creation in which the 'elan vital' pushes outward from inside every living organism in an effort to achieve perfection and freedom. This impulse is the source of energy which impels a being to improve itself and to push over any obstacle which bars the way. The 'elan vital' is the source of all evolutionary change, although this process may be stopped or diverted."⁶ Bergson saw in the "evolution of life...a crossing of matter by creative consciousness, and effort to set free, by force of ingenuity and invention, something which in animals still remains imprisoned and is only finally released when we reach man."⁷

The principal objection to the theory of creative evolution was that its use of a mysterious vital impulse and its substitution of intuition for intellect led to mysticism.⁸ Bergson objected to the usual Darwinian concept of evolution because it dealt with the products of evolution, mistaking them for the evolutionary process itself. It will be of interest to us later to note how Bergson related reproduction and evolution:

Both are the manifestation of an inward impulse... of two instincts which make their appearance with life and later become the two great motives of human activity, love, and ambition.⁹

Even before he had distinguished himself as an accomplished paleontologist, Pierre Teilhard de Chardin was deeply affected by traditional dualistic attitudes toward mind and matter.¹⁰ Teilhard became convinced that mind and matter are not two antagonistic substances but two aspects of the same cosmic stuff. He felt that it was fallacious to confine consciousness only to higher forms of life and believed that the "within" or "consciousness" is a dimension that pervades all cosmic matter, although at different intensities. In this view, matter is more than just lifeless atoms and particles. Teilhard believed that even at an apparently mechanical level some slight form of consciousness is concealed--so called inanimate matter has this "conscious within" adhered to it at some subtle level. Further the increasingly developed "conscious" is always accompanied by a correspondingly better and more complete material framework. According to Teilhard the higher development of life cannot be explained by the accepted realities of natural selection, a struggle for existence and random mutations. He postulates the existence of a force intrinsic to cosmic matter which systematically makes life more complex.

Thus "evolution possesses a definite direction, progressing on a chosen axis" with an upward development from one zoological stratum to another marked by two common features. First, the nervous system becomes notably more refined and concentrated. Second, the brain becomes larger and more convoluted. Teilhard considered these external features to be proof of the "conscious within's" determination to have the human species attain its evolutionary goal--the Omega Point of Infinite Consciousness. He believed that "the living world consists intrinsically of consciousness clothed in flesh." Consequently, the axis on which evolution drives ahead is of a spiritual and not a material nature.¹¹

Teilhard emphasized some important difficulties he found with a purely mechanistic concept of evolution. One point was that man is not comparable to his antecedents because his thinking enables him to intervene in the course of his own evolution. Another point was that man must develop intellectually, spiritually, and morally as well as biologically.¹² Finally as human development approaches the Omega Point, Teilhard foresaw an alliance of science and religion. He considered science and religion not as opposites but two sides or two phases of a single act of knowledge.¹³

R. M. Bucke makes the case for the human race being in a process of evolving toward a new kind of consciousness, which he calls "cosmic consciousness."¹⁴ This cosmic state is a higher state of consciousness than the self consciousness now possessed by mankind. In his analysis, Bucke classifies consciousness into three grades. (1) Simple consciousness possessed by the upper half of the animal kingdom which has an awareness of things around them and of the fact that their limbs are part of themselves. (2) Self-consciousness as possessed by human beings, an awareness of themselves as distinct entities with the capacity to develop language. (3) Cosmic consciousness marked by an awareness of the life and order of the universe. According to Bucke, this cosmic sense is characterized by a number of distinct features including subjective light, moral elevation, intellectual illumination or genius, loss of fear of death, feelings of indescribable elation and joy, the suddenness of the awakening, and change in personality. These characteristics were gleaned from an examination of the lives and writings of a number of great mystics and geniuses. Bucke believed that these individuals were forerunners of the men and women of the future, i.e., that through the development of individuals the race was evolving toward this higher state of cosmic consciousness. He was quick to point out that possession of the cosmic sense did not imply omniscience or infallibility.

Bucke presents a model of how the intellect evolves indicating percepts (registration of sense impressions), receipts (composite image of hundreds/thousands of percepts), concepts (named receipts which imply the possession of a language) and intuition. Bucke does not attribute this evolutionary process to any mechanism or driving force. Nor does he suggest any physiological changes that might accompany

this evolution. He does, however, give the evolution of consciousness a quantifiable goal or direction --that of mystical experience. We shall explore the importance of these ideas later.

The mathematician and philosopher P.D. Ouspensky studied man from the point of view of what he may become--i.e., of his "possible evolution."¹⁵ He attempted to understand what the evolution of man meant and looked for special conditions for it. His fundamental premise was that "man as we know him is not a completed being; that nature develops him up to a certain point." After that, any further development must come from man's own effort. In a sense, then, man chooses to develop, remain static, or degenerate. Thus, the evolution of man means the development of certain inner qualities which would otherwise remain undeveloped and cannot be developed by themselves. He also maintained that this inner development can only occur, under certain definite conditions, with the aid of inner effort and knowledge of certain methods. For Ouspensky, without personal effort and help, evolution is impossible. "With right methods and the right efforts man can acquire control of consciousness and become conscious of himself with all that it implies."

Some other aspects of Ouspensky's approach should be mentioned here for later comparison. He discusses four mind centers in the body which are related to the brain and spinalcolumn and which control our ordinary actions. These centers must be working right for man to develop, and thus development requires certain necessary conditions. He must understand his present position and difficulties and must have a strong desire to get out of his present state. His external conditions must be right--sufficient free time to study and an environment suitable to study. A school would also be necessary with an ordered life accompanied by sufficient personal freedom: i.e., the right political conditions. Ouspensky talks about the necessary desire to improve but does not discuss or explain what gives rise to this desire.

Recently Alistair Hardy has attempted to expand Darwinism by arguing that the science of evolution can no longer be fundamentally materialistic. He acknowledges the fact that "a great deal of the process of evolution can be reduced to physical and chemical processes: but that his reductionism will not explain the more important part of life."¹⁶ His view parallels those of Wallace and Teilhard: i.e., the view that evolution is also of a spiritual nature.

Present-day research on the brain and the study of consciousness is also coming to the conclusion that material reductionism is not enough to explain how the brain/mind complex works, let alone the phenomena of creativity and genius.

In this section we have considered the theories of Darwin, Lamarck, Wallace, Bergson, Bucke, Teilhard, Ouspensky, and briefly Hardy in respect to the evolution of

"human nature." All but Darwin, it seems, had something to say about an inner desire, impulse, or agency driving mankind forward/upward toward a particular goal. Often, when the target of evolution was clearly defined, the impulse or mechanism was left unexplained or vice versa. None of these ingenious theories discuss the physiology of the mechanism or root of the driving force within the human frame. Consequently most of these ideas seem unverifiable and are dismissed as mystical, reinforcing the schism between science and religion. We believe that we can bridge this disparity and come to a better understanding of the evolutionary process in human beings by investigating the ancient concept of Kundalini and approaching evolution from the perspective suggested by Gopi Krishna.¹⁷

III. The Concept of Kundalini. According to Hindu tradition and Yoga, kundalini is latent force/energy in the human organism responsible for mystical experience. In his Serpent Power Arthur Avalon describes kundalini Shakti as the "supreme power in the human body by the arousing of which Yoga is achieved...Kundalini is in fact the cosmic energy in bodies and as such the cause of all, and though manifesting as, is not confined to, any of her products."¹⁸ In this way, kundalini is seen as a force dormant in human beings that can be aroused to activity through certain disciplines such as the various forms of Yoga. Traditionally one who has some success at yoga may gain talents related to creativity, genius, psychic ability and mystical experience. It was known in India that the awakening process has the possibility of a morbid outcome in the form of mental illness or insanity.

Drawing upon his own personal experience and the Indian esoteric tradition, Gopi Krishna has postulated that kundalini represents a specific psychosomatic power center in human beings, and that human evolution has proceeded by the action of this mechanism in the human body and brain. He claims that human evolution is irresistibly proceeding toward a pre-determined target--mystical consciousness. In this framework the reproductive system is also the somatic mechanism by which evolution proceeds. Gopi Krishna describes the process of a kundalini awakening in terms of the amount and strength of bioenergy produced by the reproductive and nervous system. (For our purpose here we shall take the term "bioenergy" to be interchangeable with the esoteric concept of "prana.") He maintains that the "enhanced flow of a more potent form of bioenergy into the brain" is responsible for the blissful visions of the mystic, the creation of the genius, the bewildering performances of the psychic, and the mental torment of the insane. He stresses that this bioenergy is intelligent in its operation and performs every function and activity in the body in an extremely subtle manner. The flow of bioenergy is imperceptible in the average body. But upon the awakening it assumes a more radiant form that is internally discernable. It is this change in the bioenergy that is responsible for the splendor and luminous phenomena associated with mystical experience.¹⁹ Gopi Krishna's hypothesis links the experience

of the mystic, genius, psychic, and mentally ill. He proposes that a sustained experience of mystical consciousness must be accompanied by changes in the brain and nervous system. Accordingly, "kundalini is...a very definite quantifiable force, which when it reaches the brain, has definite physical and chemical impact upon it which in turn causes a change in the level of consciousness."²⁰ In other words, it is the "missing link" of human evolution: the psychophysiological linkage between sexual and mystical experience. Kundalini then provides a bridge between the inner experience of the mystic and the outer experience of the physical senses, an empirically verifiable relationship between religion and science.

Interpreting kundalini as the evolutionary energy provides us with a framework in which to examine the ideas and theories of evolution presented earlier and to see their common thread. The "inner need" of Lamarck, the "agency" of Wallace, the "elan vital" of Bergson, the "conscious within" of Teilhard de Chardin are all partial descriptions of the kundalini process.

For example, Teilhard pointed out that changes in the brain and nervous system occur as evolution progresses. He referred to the grosser changes such as the size and convolution of the brain. Now the changes wrought by kundalini are at a more subtle level.²¹ Teilhard has also argued that evolution possesses a definite direction. This idea is consistent with the concept of a predetermined target--mystical experience. The concept of a directed evolutionary process has also been chosen to be consistent with extensions of New Darwinism.²²

The mysterious "elan vital" of Bergson, the source of evolutionary change becomes the less mysterious kundalini. All the esoteric literature now becomes available for us to study and interpret. This evolutionary change now has a direction and purpose. As kundalini relates the evolutionary process with the reproductive system, Bergson also related reproduction and evolution as "manifestations of an inward impulse." The awakening of kundalini is a re-starting of the mechanism working in the womb from conception onward. It is in fact a rebirth (the same rebirth referred to in the Christian scriptures.)

Wallace suggested a different agency coming "into play in order to develop the higher intellectual and spiritual nature of man." These higher natures are the targets of evolution and the "different agency" is kundalini.

We have related the ideas of other scholars to the kundalini hypothesis to show the beauty of profundity of the idea. In one conceptual step Gopi Krishna has related apparently independent states of consciousness and found the lever or mechanism by which they may be obtained. Thus, he has linked them somatically in a way that lends itself to establishing an empirical relationship to subjective states of higher consciousness. Without kundalini, the link, the

phenomena of creativity, genius, mystical experience, psychic ability and morbid states of consciousness are destined to be viewed as capricious and mysterious. This kundalini hypothesis also gives us direction for understanding the evolutionary process and the proper code of conduct that the human race must observe.

IV. Darwinism, Yoga, and Kundalini. Yoga was developed as the science of its day. To understand its true significance we must view it as a complete system with a specific purpose. According to Gopi Krishna, "the disciplines of Yoga are aimed at accelerating the evolutionary process in human beings with the help of the organic lever known as kundalini."²³ Yoga is not just a system of personal salvation. It is "merely the first step in a long process aimed to enlarge the capacity of the human encephalon, ultimately resulting in the establishment of a Superscience for the exploration of transcendental realities."²⁴ The methods and disciplines of yoga are there to provide for a healthy attainment of the target of the evolutionary process: mystical consciousness.

The first two limbs of the classical yoga system described by Patanjali relate to the development of the proper codes of conduct and thought required before any spiritual (evolutionary) advancement can occur.²⁵ The next three limbs lead the seeker to gain the necessary control of the physical senses. The final three stages--concentration (dharana), meditation (dhyana), complete absorption (samadhi) areti meant to bring about control of consciousness.

Patanjali refers to the first two limbs as the Commandments and the Rules. Simply, stated the Commandments are non-injury truthfulness, and abstention from stealing, impurity, and covetousness. The Rules are austerity, charity, worship, spiritual reading, and adherence to scriptural ordinances. It does not take much to see that these are analogous to the basic tenets of the Judeo-Christian tradition as well as the Buddhist Commandments among others. At some point we must ask ourselves why these various traditions having different founders would have analogous guidelines for behavior. The answer is fundamental to the process of evolution and is explained by considering the mystic/genius to be a forerunner of the future man as suggested by Bucke.

When viewed from an evolutionary perspective these ordinances have profound meaning for human behavior. They imply that in order to evolve, mankind must obey certain rules and that evolutionary progress cannot be made without advancement in man's moral nature. The adherence to or violation of the basic tenets of religions carries with it definite physiological consequences for human beings. These basic principles espoused by religion are not just whimsical attitudes of mind but affect the entire human organism. Yoga, and, in effect, all religious traditions are founded on the principle of continually building man's moral nature to eventually allow for the healthy evolution of the species. It is really on this point that religion and materialistic sciences differ. The greater our advancement in science,

the greater the need for the development of our moral nature and hence our proper evolution. We need only observe the stockpiles of nuclear weapons to know the importance of this moral development.

Bergson, Bucke, Teilhard and others have referred to the development of a moral nature in human beings as part of the evolutionary process. Professor J. B. S. Haldane has argued in Causes of Evolution that it is fallacious to assume that natural selection always makes a race of animals and plants better suited to survive.²⁶ The kundalini hypothesis also breaks with Darwinism on this point. The concept of the "survival of the fittest" needs reinterpretation as it applies to human nature and moral development. Our struggle is not only one of physical strength. The length of limb, size of body, or speed of foot may still be important for survival in the animal kingdom. But it is no longer a critical factor for human survival. The amenities made available through discovery of science have changed that. In fact, according to the kundalini hypothesis, these amenities have been provided to allow human beings the energy and time to evolve; that is, to make the struggle for existence less brutal.

To evolve properly man's "struggle" takes on an inner aspect. Ouspensky and Teilhard have pointed out that man must be a conscious participant in the evolutionary process. The problems faced by the very creative and talented often result from the fact that they are unaware of the source of their genius and are thus unaware of basic Commandments and Rules they must follow. The kundalini hypothesis suggests that there is a law of evolution just as there is a law of gravity. The principles of basic operation of the law are contained in the spiritual and religious traditions of mankind and apply to the development of our moral nature. This Law is incompatible with our current understanding of the Darwinian concept of a struggle for existence.

V. Requirements for Healthy Evolution. As we have suggested, the disciplines of Yoga and the basic tenets of the major religious faiths are in fact necessary prescriptions for the healthy evolution of the human race. These traditions provide an established framework that may be used with minor changes over time to ensure our proper development. Simply put, we need to foster love, compassion, and charity while subduing any tendency toward greed, aggression, hate, malice. We need to live in the world in a moderate way controlling ambition, fostering detachment, keeping our body healthy with the proper diet and exercise. A healthy body is required to support the stronger demands of kundalini activity. We need to set aside time for us to evolve. Our leisure time needs to be spent in a useful way toward this end. The amenities provided by science came to provide us the time and energy to do this.

Society must be structured to support the individual's need to evolve. We must be able to provide sufficient food, shelter, and comfort. No doubt, major changes in the econom-

ic and political structure of all societies will have to occur. These changes should be brought about in a peaceful harmonious way in tune with the evolutionary needs of the race.

Our religious institutions must change as well. Practitioners of all faiths need to realize what they have in common with other religious traditions. From an evolutionary perspective, the founders of the major faiths were the forerunners of future men and women. Dr. Bucke pointed out that an illumined individual is not necessarily also omniscient or infallible. Each faith should be able to practice its own traditions while recognizing the validity of others. In a sense the intelligence behind the universe has chosen us all and has exercised this choice in ways compatible with different cultures and climates. Religious intolerance is at the root of most of the strife in the world today. The hatred and aggression being fostered needs to be replaced by love and cooperation.

There are a number of critical points that should be understood in light of the kundalini hypothesis if we are to evolve properly. The first is that the evolutionary impulse continues whether or not we are aware of it. Thus, if the life is not "balanced" in the proper way an abortion of the process may take place. Accordingly, this abortive procedure takes place in the nervous system, brain, and "mind." Nature has its own fail-safe device to ensure that its goals are attained. This also explains the sudden or spontaneous occurrence of kundalini related experiences. The driving force continues and when the system is ripe the evolutionary impulse acts. The "ripeness" of the system is determined in part by heredity and has been discussed by both Bucke and Krishna.

A second point is that the kundalini mechanism can be triggered by application of the mind or concentration. This is a very important point. Prayer, meditation, study, reading, watching television are all forms of mental application and thus stimulate the organic evolutionary mechanism. It is for this reason that too much concentration can be detrimental to our mental and physical well being. The yoga system was devised for an agrarian society and should not be transferred wholesale to our present way of life. Our way of life must be balanced between physical effort and mental application.

Thirdly, the kundalini hypothesis offers a reason for the idea of God. It is not a pathological condition of mind or a search for a father/mother figure. It is the ideal to which we are evolving, and serves as an anchor for the human mind. Our purpose is not to achieve great wealth or attain to power but to evolve to a higher state of consciousness in consort with the experience of mystics of the past. It is absolutely mandatory that our children come to know the real purpose of their existence.

Finally, proper evolution requires that we be conscious participants in the process. We do have free will to an extent. We can choose whether or not to evolve.

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⁷H. Bergson, Mind-Energy. New York, NY: Henry Holt and Co., 1920

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¹⁰J. Kopp, Teilhard de Chardin: A New Synthesis of Evolution. Paramas, NJ: Paulist Press, 1964

¹¹Ibid.

¹²B. Delfgaauw, Evolution: The Theory of Teilhard de Chardin. English trans. New York, NY: Harper and Row, 1964

¹³Kopp, Op. Cit.

¹⁴R. M. Bucke, Cosmic Consciousness. New York, NY: Dutton, 1969

¹⁵P. D. Ouspensky, The Psychology of Man's Possible Evolution. New York, NY: Bantam Books, 1968

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¹⁸A. Avalon, The Serpent Power. New York, NY: Dover, 1974

¹⁹Gopi Krishna, Autobiography: Part III; Chap. 4. Unpublished.

²⁰Gopi, Krishna, Kundalini: The Evolutionary Energy in Man. See end-note 10.

²¹Ibid.

²²G.P. Menos and K. Jones Menos, "Revelation and Inspiration: Paranormal Phenomena in Light of the Kundalini Paradigm". Paper read in part

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²⁴Ibid.

²⁵C. Johnston, The Yoga of Patanjali. Albuquerque, NM: Brotherhood of Life, 1983.

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SPIRIT SURVIVAL OF BODILY DEATH--PRO AND CON:
DATA FROM PSYCHICAL RESEARCH

Frank C. Tribbe

After arguing for the inadequacy of the super-ESP hypothesis, the author offers several instances of mediumistic cases and also several instances of non-mediumistic cases all of which he suggests provide evidence of survival of physical death. He also discusses briefly the relevance in this context of evidence for survival deriving from "channeling," apparitions, and "views from the threshold of death."

The hard-core critics of survival evidence are few in number and are apparent agnostics, who argue that survival proponents are religionists whose "beliefs" preclude objectivity, and that the claimed evidence is unimpressive, especially because other explanations are more scientifically acceptable.

The more numerous critics are the parapsychologists who accept telepathy and clairvoyance but espouse the Rhinian bias that meaningful survival evidence cannot be scientifically obtained (many were initially trained by J.B. Rhine and associates at FRNM), and they use that weak-reed the super-ESP theory, to justify their largely ignoring the survival area and in effect ostracizing survival researchers such as Stevenson,¹ Osiris,² Roll,³ and Dean,⁴ for presumably operating in the realm of religion. And yet, not a single case or datum of evidence has ever been cited in support of the super-ESP hypothesis--it is a bald theory not derived from data.

My paper, "Robert Ashby and the Super ESP Hypothesis," was presented February 14, 1981 to a conference of the Southeastern Regional Parapsychological Assn., and was published in Theta⁵ and in my current book The Ashby Guidebook for Study of the Paranormal⁶ and it demonstrates, conclusively, I feel, that the super-ESP theory is untenable and should no longer be considered a bar to meaningful survival research. That theory presumes that if a fact or information physically exists anywhere on earth, or if any living person has knowledge of same, it is more reasonable to assume that the medium obtained that knowledge by his own ESP rather than by communication from the claimed spirit of a deceased person. Obviously, the theory is limited to evidenced mediumistically obtained, and I will later point to more than a dozen different kinds of survival data not so derived, so that survival skeptics who say that "we have no independent evidence for spirit survival of bodily death" are using the "eyes closed" approach.

Moreover, the theory is seriously flawed otherwise. Cases abound in which not only mediums but hypnotized subjects speak in foreign languages not known to them and do so responsively and at length; both Ian Stevenson and C.J. Ducasse considered this to involve a "skill" that must be

learned by practice and cannot be "transmitted" by ESP or otherwise. Also, in many elaborate mediumistic cases it would be necessary for the medium to provide an unconscious dramatization ability; most of the super-ESP proponents were writing 20 years or more ago, before the advent of dream research, and they blithely pointed to the supposed parallel of the ability of the subconscious mind during dream-time to "fabricate plausible fiction" with no real meaning--yet we now know that dreams are not fabricated fiction, but involve higher-self guidance, OOB's, innate therapy and catharsis, communication from entities incarnate, ex-carnate and discarnate. Paul Beard in Survival of Death⁷ points to three weaknesses of the super-ESP theory: (1) It offers no explanation of how the medium selects the items needed, (2) nor of why such powers have not long since been discovered and harnessed, (3) nor why the medium's subconscious does not ever disclose some knowledge of these sources. Also, Beard reminds us that the SPR records of the three best sets of mediumistic cases--the "cross-correspondences," the "book tests," and the "Times newspaper tests"--involved activity suggested, designed, and carried-out totally by the alleged communicators, not by the researchers. Ducasse has also noted that not just information is obtained by mediums, but often they clearly disclose mental abilities and skills characteristic of the deceased.

Although Rhine eschewed survival research, as noted in his writings (1960-1971), in the summer of 1974 shortly before his death, he acknowledged to Ashby that "a psi facility postulates a kind of consciousness which spiritist evidence indicates does survive." But survival critics have been content to ignore survival, knowing that without funding or peer support this sub-field of survival research would wither on the vine--which is what has happened. Mediumistic cases the critics choose to ignore are represented by the following categories:

a. Survival critic Kenneth Walker boldly stated: "No medium has ever imported knowledge that did not exist in the mind of some living person." So, W.F. Neech set out to bury that fallacy by writing the book, No Living Person Could Have Known,⁸ in which twelve well-documented and researched cases refute the critic's claim. One of those cases, involving the famous R-101 air crash in France on October 5, 1930, provided data two days later by a mediumistic communication from the dead captain of the ship, giving a mass of technical details regarding the (then unknown) cause of the crash; experts admitted it could only have come from the ship's captain.

b. The celebrated SPR cross-correspondence cases were ostensibly orchestrated by the deceased F.W.H. Myers, who had been a classicist perhaps without peer; these message fragments, involving references to obscure classical literature were communicated to eight or more mediums world-wide,

over a period of several months, and facets of them continued for several years. Most of the mediums were unknown to each other; and only one, Mrs. Verrall, had any classical knowledge at all. It was only after all the data were in that the investigators could piece it together and see the clear patterns of the complete message. Not surprisingly, however, when Alan Gauld summarized the cross correspondences in his chapter, "Discarnate Survival," in Wolman's Handbook⁹ he took no personal position on the case.

c. A similar case involving purposiveness, a deliberate plan to communicate that presumably was devised by Dr. A.W. Verrall after his death, came to be known as the Ear of the Dionysius case.¹⁰ This title referred to a cave near Syracuse, Sicily, used as a prison and which had strong acoustical properties, utilized by Dionysius the Elder (405-367 B.C.) to overhear conversations of the prisoners. Neither the medium nor the sitter had any knowledge of the Greek poetry telling this tale, and only upon conclusion of the series of scripts could scholars piece out the message.

d. The SPR book tests were totally originated by the alleged communicators without advance plan of the investigators, and always involved a library available to the sitter but where the medium had never been. Instructions might be: "ninth book on the third shelf counting left to right in the book case to the right of the door in the drawing room; turn to p. 37." Thus, there would be found a sentence or phrase personal and significant to sitter and communicator.

e. Dolores Jay, unsophisticated wife of rural minister Carroll E. Jay,¹² served as guinea-pig while he honed his hypnosis skill for expected use in counselling parishioners. She unexpectedly regressed and spoke in colloquial German as "Gretchen," a nineteenth century teenager. Dr. Ian Stevenson investigated the case for five years and found it to be a valid case of responsive xenoglossy, important to parapsychology. The many validated cases of responsive xenoglossy arise not only from hypnotism but from mediumship and spontaneously, and where exhaustive investigation precludes either chance or concealed knowledge of the foreign language involved.

f. Audible voices of deceased persons are often reported, but they carry strong conviction when the hearer is someone you know well and trust. In the Spring of 1972, Audre, my wife, had been trying to get her parents in New Jersey to come to Washington, D.C. for a visit when the cherry blossoms were at their peak. Shortly thereafter,

a phone call advised that her mother had unexpectedly died. Arranging with the office staff for her absence, she left the building to drive home and then on to New Jersey. As she put her key in the car's door-lock, she heard her mother's voice says, "Oh, Audre, if you think the cherry blossoms are beautiful, you should see what I am seeing!"

g. Somewhat comparable to unknown language skill is the case of a four-year-old boy, two weeks after his father's death who was doodling on large sheets of paper in the hotel lobby. Later the Desk Clerk observed to the mother that the doodling resembled shorthand, so they showed it to the nearby public stenographer. It was an obsolete form of shorthand the father had known, and after decipherment it was seen as a message to the widow, enabling her to find much needed funds in a safety-deposit box at the bank.

h. Drop-in communicators, by definition, are not known to mediums or sitters, and in instances like the "Runki case"¹⁵ the crucial information was known to no one living. In an Iceland seashore village one spring, the spirit of the village drunk nick-named Runki boisterously broke into a regular weekly seance demanding his "leg." By the third week of such intrusion the sitters finally calmed the spirit down enough so that he identified himself as Runki and explained as follows: "While drunk, he had stolen a rowboat and put out to sea as an early winter storm was brewing; the boat capsized, he was drowned, a shark bit off his leg, the one-legged corpse washed ashore and was buried in the local churchyard; he wanted his missing leg found and added to his coffin. Diligently the sitters searched up and down the coast and finally found a town where indeed a man's leg had washed ashore; by then it was too late to dig a grave and so, as customary, they buried it in the cement wall of a hotel annex under construction. The hotel owner gave permission to break down the wall, the leg was removed, the village priest opened Runki's grave and added the leg to the coffin. Runki dropped in the next week to thank the sitters and was never heard from again.

i. We all are aware of the magic of electronic-tape sound-recording, which can be listened to and then electronically erased if one wishes. The older ones among us remember the dictaphone (little seen after the 1940's) which recorded onto a hard rubber sleeve or spool turning on a mandrel; one's voice vibration in the microphone was duplicated in a lathe-like cutting tool which cut a groove in the turning rubber sleeve and impressed those sound vibrations into the groove;

when run on a matching secretarial player the voice-sound faithfully came through the earphones. Erasure was accomplished with another tool that cut off the layer of grooved rubber, ready for another recording.

Edgar Wallace, English author of 150 thriller-mysteries, died. His secretary, Curtis, went to work for another London author. Both writers used the dictaphone. A few weeks later, Curtis, in his apartment, started typing from a fresh group of sleeves sent by his new employer. As usual, the freshly recording sleeve made three or four revolutions while the writer had been organizing his notes. Normally, those few seconds were in silence, but instead, Curtis heard the clear and unmistakable voice of Wallace saying, "This is how I write my stories and my books..." And then the voice of the new employer began the day's dictation. Curtis, badly shaken, replayed the sleeve several times to be sure of what he had heard. After several days of soul-searching he took the magic sleeve to Maurice Barbanell, channel of the famed Silver Birch and founder-editor of Psychic News, the newspaper of spiritualism, whom he knew only by reputation. Of course, Barbanell enjoyed the recording and Curtis' recital immensely, assured Curtis he was not crazy, and then published the story in his newspaper, to the consternation and fury of Wallace's family.

j. In the well-documented Chaffin will case,¹⁶ justice prevailed. In South Carolina, when James Chaffin died in 1921 as a result of an accident, the only will that could be found gave his entire estate to the third of his four sons, ignoring the other three and his widow. Four years later the second son dreamed his father appeared saying, "My last will is in my overcoat pocket." The eldest son, living twenty miles away, had the father's overcoat; in the lining of the coat they found a paper on which the father had written, "Look at Genesis 27 in my Dad's old Bible." The Bible was in the attic of the old homestead, and the page of Genesis was folded to make a pocket; inside was a later will, dividing the estate among the four sons and providing for the widow. It was accepted by the court in lieu of the earlier will.

k. In Stephan A. Schwartz's books Secret Valuts of Time¹⁷ and The Alexandria Project¹⁸ he recites numerous instances in which teams of psychics were used to locate archaeological artifacts totally unknown today, and in some cases to thereafter explain the meaning of some to the prior civilization.

It can readily be seen that neither the super-ESP theory nor the "Occam's razor" philosophy of parsimony could be used to fault the above categories of mediumistic data, and moreover, some types--such as dream communication and Electronic Voice Phenomena (not discussed)--might not even be truly mediumistic, though one should be cautious in claiming the absence of mediumship. Oppositely, hauntings and poltergeist phenomena clearly involve a spiritist element, but it seems impossible to fairly claim they are evidence for survival without more.

As an aside, it is appropriate to note that the current fad of interest in "channeled" material involves nothing new except the label. Revelatory wisdom from high spiritual beings and sources has been with us forever--most of the wisdom books of the Old Testament are clearly of that genre; as is turn-of-the-century spirit writings through such as Geraldine Cummins and G. Vale Owen (some of the greatest literature in the area of psychical research), and current communicators exemplified by "Bartholomew" who began before "channeling."

At this point it is well to note a technical caveat respecting a group of cases which Paul Beard cautions are not reports "from the interior" but are "views from the threshold" of death. I refer to those we know as out-of-body, bi-location, doppelganger, deathbed visions, peak-in-Darien cases, and near-death-experiences. As to all of these, the person has not yet died, and so there was no survival of death by his spirit--it is like hearsay or second-hand evidence. This is not to say that such cases are unimportant--quite the contrary, the out-of-body experience is especially important because, if real, it establishes that there is a non-physical component in man that is capable of surviving outside of the body, and therefore might be expected to survive after death of the body. Examination of that facet of the "threshold" cases is therefore very important, but would have to involve a separate investigation paper. Whether the OOBEE involves a true exteriorization of consciousness continues to be a matter of controversy, but in my view there are several varieties of the OOBEE which satisfactorily establish its reality.

Additionally, it must be noted that in all of these cases of views from the threshold, and especially in deathbed visions and near-death cases, there often are veridical and evidential aspects which indicate a contact with the after-life. Unfortunately, however, those aspects are not aspects of solid evidence of spirit survival in most instances because there seems to be alternative explanations.

But the non-mediumistic cases, which survival critics do not dare to examine, provide data that are just as strong. More than a dozen such types are outlined below:

a. Apparition cases have always provided some of the strongest and most convincing evidences of survival. One of the best in modern times was the experience of Dr. Elizabeth Kubler-Ross whose deceased patient Mary Swartz, blocked her from getting to the elevator, walked with her down the hall, sat across the desk and argued with her and--when requested by Elizabeth--took up a pen and wrote a note to Elizabeth's clergy associate--which note he still has.

b. Even stronger, scientifically, are the apparitions collectively and reciprocally perceived, several dozen of which are described by Dr. Hornell Hart in a 45-page report to the SPR,¹⁸ from which he excluded all cases involving mediumistic seances. Typical is the case of three adults in a Philadelphia living room who saw and recognized a relative dead for ten years; the appearance confirmed a promise the deceased had made before death; the evidence was recorded the same evening. Description included details of the dress worn by the apparition and its movements across the room to examine a portrait, and back.

c. Because of alternative explanations, reincarnation cases give little proof of reincarnation, but often are excellent evidence of survival. Dr. Stevenson reports the Weisz-Roos case¹⁹ which is typical in such regard: Young Dutch portraitist Henriette Roos married a man named Weisz, but they soon divorced. In accordance with Dutch custom, her mother urged her to resume her maiden name, Roos; she refused, saying Weisz felt "just right" to her, but then compromised by using the hyphenated Weisz-Roos. Shortly thereafter she moved to Paris to resume her studies, and took a garret studio with sky-light. Her work did not go well, however, and then one night she awoke with a compulsion to paint; after fighting the urge for a few minutes she finally got up and reached for the light-switch string--but a strong admonition seemed to be urging: No light! Shrugging, she moved in the semi-darkness to her easel and took up the palette, and began to paint with feverish haste, barely seeing and hardly knowing what she was doing. After a short while she felt satiated, lay down the brush and went back to bed. In the morning she saw on the canvas a beautiful portrait of a young woman. That evening, she told the experience to friends and one present was a medium who willingly went into trance for Henriette, and said, "I see the name, G-O-Y-A. He was a great Spanish painter, but near the end of his life had to flee from political enemies to Southern France where you took him in and sheltered him until his death. He wants to return the favor by helping you with your art, but you resist too much, so he

made you paint in the dark last night." Henriette knew nothing of Goya but his name, but in a biography of Goya that was then shown her, she read that the exiled Goya lived at the end of his life with a French woman named Leocadia Weisz.

d. Reincarnation flashback may not be thought of as giving strong evidence for survival unless it happens in your presence. In 1970. I was giving a VIP tour of Washington, D.C. to a close friend who was a strong medium. He said he had always felt a strange affinity for Washington and for the man Washington. When we reached Mount Vernon he became visibly and emotionally affected; and at Washington's tomb he broke down and cried uncontrollably. I led him away as he babbled, "He was the only one who paid any attention to me or cared for me!" I questioned him as we slowly walked, and his story was that he had been a negro slave of Washington, whose principal job had been to raise catfish in a pond (now covered by an oval hay field adjoining the tomb), and to catch and clean the fish whenever Washington wanted them for the table. The next day my friend remembered very little of this.²⁹

Only six weeks later another good friend, also a strong medium from a different part of the country, told me over the phone of his traumatic visit to Montecello, where memories of Jefferson began to surface. In the cellar hallway emotions overcame him and he staggered to the outdoor area to the stables. There he lost consciousness, and began remembering life as a nineteen-year-old negro slave of Jefferson who was too handsome and naive for his own good. Caught in flagrante with one of the young, but white, matrons of the household, he was about to be hung when Jefferson heard the commotion and intervened, ordering that a caning by the slave master be the end of the matter. Three days later he was riding his mule on an errand into town. A dozen white men jumped from the bushes, knocked him from his mule and beat him. He came to consciousness in the stable area, sobbing heavily.³⁰

e. Susy Smith has a chapter on possession in Life is Forever³¹ and tells of the quiet and moody but studious young seventeen-year-old Iris Farczady, living with her parents in a suburb of Budapest, who became seriously ill with the flu in August of 1933. The mother, nursing her daughter one night, heard such a deep sigh that she thought her daughter had died, but her breathing and heartbeat seemed normal. Next morning the girl awoke and began to shout in a foreign language and tried to run out of the house. Through an interpreter from the University they learned that she spoke only

Spanish; she said she was Madrilena Salvio, a charwoman in Madrid, Spain, who had been married to a laborer, bore fourteen children, and at age forty died of tuberculosis in August of 1933. Two years later Madrilena was happily living in Iris's body, and learning to speak a new language, which is a very different ending from that of Lurancy Vennum, known as the "Watseka (Illinois) wonder"²² when in 1878 her sickly body was taken over by Mary Roff who had died twelve years earlier in the same town at age eighteen. Having only the memories of Mary Roff, the two families agreed that the girl should move in with the Roffs. Three months later Mary announced that the body was now well and strong enough, and she would return it to Lurancy, which she did.

f. Phone calls that by-pass the phone company electronic controls but ring the telephone instrument, and often have resulted in meaningful conversations with recognizable voices of the dead, are reported by D. Scott Rogo.²² For years, clocks have stopped at the moment of the death of the owner. And now, by appointment, specific deceased persons appear for up to two minutes on television screens and on computer screens and sometimes speak, according to recent reports from Europe.²³

g. Materializations have long been reported in spiritualist seances, especially when the room is almost completely dark. But with infrared photography it appears certain that full-bodied materializations (separate from the psychic medium) were produced by many of the strong "physical" mediums earlier in this century, such as Frank Kluski, Margery, Florence Cook, Mrs. Post-Parrish, Jack Webber, and K. M. Rinehard.²⁴ Also, wax gloves as well as photographs have established the presence of materialized body parts, especially hands.

h. Spirit "extras," usually of known deceased persons such as relatives, appear on normally posed photographs for several reasons: (1) upon request or by attraction of the subject, (2) when photos are taken in the dark or at a blank wall with hopes of obtaining the picture of a spirit, (3) when the photographer is a strong psychic, (4) when the apparition is visible to the photographer, and (5) solely by desire of the spirit.²⁵

i. Spirit art or spirit guided art can be of several kinds. Clairvoyant artist Coral Polge in London today usually works on stage with another clairvoyant who gives an audience member a reading while Coral sketches the spirit in question for the subject. Often the recipient will return

later and show a photograph almost identical to Coral's sketch.

j. Occasionally, one hears a story of a pre-funeral viewing of the corpse when the mist-like body was observed over the corpse. About the turn of the century, photographer Baraduc in Paris made repeated photographs of the corpse of his son, and later of his wife. The photos show the apparent emergence and development of the mist-like form over the body, continuing for a span of several hours.

k. Weight loss at the moment of death has been reported a number of times.²⁷ The first such experiment, using a delicate balance scale on which the bed of a dying patient was placed was performed by British physician Duncan MacDougall while working at Massachusetts General Hospital, Boston in 1906-7. Apart from the gradual and steady weight loss of one ounce per hour due to evaporation, perspiration, etc., at the very moment of death he found a sudden drop of 3/4 ounce to 1 1/2 ounces.²⁸ In 1970 in England, MacDougall's results were duplicated with one patient. On Dec. 18, 1972 in Dusseldorf, West Germany, Swedish Dr. Nils-Olof Jacobson found the weight loss of his patient at death to be 21 grams. In each of these cases the doctors involved suggested that this must have been the weight of the departing soul.* (See p. 50)

l. At the turn of the century, Alphonse Bertillion developed fingerprint identification, and shortly thereafter the Polish psychic, Kluski, was doing materializations in Paris and a "glove" of paraffin wax was created by a materialized hand. The glove was cut open and the fingerprint proved not to be Kluski's.

m. A friend of mine lost her husband of many years; he had been the town's medical doctor. A pharmaceutical salesman, neither a close friend nor a psychic, finally got up nerve enough to tell her that a week after the death he had felt compelled to get up in the middle of the night, go to his desk, and write furiously--in the dark--for several minutes. He showed her what he had written--it was a very evidential love letter from her deceased husband. He took it, together with samples of the salesman's and the doctor's handwriting, and sent them off to a graphologist for opinion as to authorship of the "questioned document." The report was that the doctor's writing much more closely matched that love-letter than did the salesman's.²⁹

Negative evidence or circumstantial evidence can sometimes be the most compelling. In my 1987 paper to this Academy³⁰ I described the image of Gaudaloupe, a scientifically inexplicable mystical image on a peasant's cactus-fiber tilma. In Dec., 1531, shortly after the Spanish takeover of Mexico, Juan Diego, a new Christian, was visited by Mary, mother of Jesus. When Juan appeared before the unbelieving Bishop, her picture was instantaneously imprinted, full-size on the front of his garment. It hangs today in its own basilica there, undiminished by time and in vivid colors. Science can only say that the additive used to make the image is no medium known to art or science in the sixteenth century or later.

In my 1983 paper to this Academy³¹ I sketched the historical and scientific data concerning the Shroud of Turin and its mystical image of a crucified, badly beaten man, which data tended to establish its authenticity as the burial cloth of Jesus and a Christ-powered photograph of his crucified body in the moment of resurrection when, additionally, the body was consumed--by witness of this image. I explained that the body's image, without color or additive or penetration of the fabric, was a photographic negative with three dimensionality encoded, that had been made through space, not by contact. In our April, 1989 Journal, my article³² dissected the badly flawed carbon-dating exercise of 1988 or explained that the Shroud and its image could not have been of Middle Age provenance. To modern science, the Shroud's image remains a total enigma.

Obviously, I believe in spirit survival of bodily death--but not by reason of any one case or category of cases. It is the aggregate of the hundreds of cases of some two dozen categories that impresses and convinces me.

Science and reason have their place, but perhaps the poet said it best:

Life is real, life is earnest,
And the grave is not the goal.
Dust thou art to dust returneth
Was not spoken of the soul.

Longfellow.

¹Ian Stevenson, "Research into the Evidence of Man's Survival After Death". J. of Nervous and Mental Disease, 165: 1977.

²Karlis Osis, At the Hour of Death. New York, NY: Avon Books, 1977.

³W. G. Roll, This World or That. Studentlitteratur, Lund, Sweden, 1989.

⁴Douglas Dean, The Mystery of Healing. In press.

⁵Theta, 12/3. Autumn, 1984,

⁶Frank Tribbe, The Ashby Guidebook for Study of the Paranormal. York Beach, NY: Weiser, 1987.

- ⁷Paul Beard, Survival of Death. London, Eng.: Hodder and Stoughton, 1966.
- ⁸W.F. Neech, No Living Person Could Have Known. London, Eng.: Spiritualist Press, 1955.
- ⁹Handbook of Parapsychology, B.B. Wolman, ed. New York, NY: Van Nostrand, 1977.
- ¹⁰G.W. Balfour, Proceedings of The Society for Psychical Research. London, Eng., : March, 1917.
- ¹¹Susy Smith, Life is Forever. New York, NY: Putman, 1974.
- ¹²Gretchen, I Am. New York, NY: Wyden Books, 1977.
- ¹³F. Edwards, Strange World. New York, NY: Citadel Press, 1964
- ¹⁴Ian Stevenson, "A Communicator of the Drop-In Type." Journal of the American Society for Psychical Research: Jan., 1975
- ¹⁵Proceedings of the Society for Psychical Research: Vol. 36, 1926-28: pp. 517-526
- ¹⁶Grossett and Dunlap, 1978.
- ¹⁷Delacorte Press, 1983
- ¹⁸Proceedings, 130/XLL of May, 1933
- ¹⁹Evidence for Survival from Claimed Memories of Former Incarnations, Peto, Surrey, England, 1961
- ²⁰See note 12
- ²¹Research in Watseka in 1890 by Richard Hodgson for the SPR, London, and reported in several of their publications. Elaborately reported in David St. Clair, Watseka. Playboy Press, 1979.
- ²²Scott Rogo, Phone Calls from the Dead. New York, NY: Prentice-Hall, 1979
- ²³New Frontiers Newsletter, 34/35, Spring, 1990
- ²⁴Beyond the Spectrum: A Survey of Supernormal Photography by Cyril Permutt. Cambridge, Eng., 1983
- ²⁵See also Note 25
- ²⁶Coral Polge, The Living Image. London, Eng., 1988
- ²⁷D.R. Wheeler, Journey to the Other Side. Ace Books, 1977.
- ²⁸J. ASPR, 1-5 May, 1907. (Article by MacDougall and letter from investigator Hereward Carrington; Editor's note; and exchange of correspondence.

²⁹Spiritual Frontiers, XI-1, Summer, 1979

³⁰Spiritual Frontiers, IX-2, Fall, 1977

³¹Proceedings of The Academy of Religion and Psychical Research, 1987

³²Proceedings of The Academy of Religion and Psychical Research. 1983

³³"Is the Shroud of Turin a Fraud?" Journal of Religion and Psychical Research, April, 1989

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*Author's note: Concerning the evidence of weight loss at death: (See above, page 45) This point was discussed at the Academy conference when I read this paper. The discussion brought out the important point that although these data are important in this context, they are open to more than one interpretation. The cause of the weight loss remains in doubt. F.C.T.

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TO BE OR NOT TO BE:
CONTEMPORARY RELIGIOUS AND PSYCHICAL PERSPECTIVES
ON SUICIDE

Louis Richard Batzler

After characterizing suicide as being, in part, an attempt to communicate about one's self to others, the author classifies types of suicides, reasons for suicide, profiles of suicidal persons, and the psychodynamics of suicide. He closes with an extensive examination of historical and contemporary religious and philosophical views of suicide and draws on psychic evidence pertaining to life-after-death in the case of the suicide.

Death is a great teacher. The shadow of death frequently casts new light on life. The silence of death sometimes speaks more meaningfully than the words of life. The stillness of death often moves and motivates more than the actions of life. For death affects our identity, values, goals, control, and choices. It changes our relationships and plans and confronts us with our very selfhood.

Suicide, as one type of death, can be especially important in teaching us about life and death, even though there are still many unknowns about suicide. Enlightenment comes from the fact that suicide is a dramatic and traumatic way, embraces many facets of one's life to some degree. Suicidal actions are physically, socially, psychologically and spiritually meaningful actions. Through suicide, or attempted suicide, individuals attempt to communicate something to themselves, to others about themselves, and to others about others. In encountering suicide, one is inevitably drawn into the many dynamics and complexities of life itself.

Suicide has multiple determinants and interacting motives, which means that suicide usually emerges out of a long developmental process and not merely from an acute, situational crisis. Suicidal behavior varies in lethality of intention, degrees of communication, cultural factors and forces, and both conscious and unconscious goals. Coping with and treatment of suicidal persons and their significant others thus involves many professional disciplines--psychology, suicidology, religion, philosophy, sociology, medicine (especially psychiatry) and legal.

DEFINING AND CLASSIFYING SUICIDES. Effective progress in coping with suicide necessitates clarity in defining and classifying the many issues involved. Definitions and classifications of suicide (taxonomy) are diverse and incomplete. This complicates prevention and treatment. Basically suicide may be defined as self-killing, directly or indirectly, which stems from one's inability or refusal to accept the demands of life.

The diversity of suicidal attitudes and behaviors can

be seen in the characterizations and classification by professionals involved in dealing with suicide.

The following types of suicide have been identified: chronic, focal, organic, concealed, undiscovered, social, attempted, gesture, threat, ideation, semi-intentional, intentional, altruistic, existential, surcease, victim-precipitated, accidental, automatization, contagious (imitation, copy cat), neglect, probability, self-destructive (hidden) transcendental, spontaneous, biological, panic, homicide-suicide, psychic, equivocal, success, blackball.

THE WHY OF SUICIDE. The most frequently asked question about suicide is WHY? Suicidologists, therapists, bereaved family members, friends, and the public seek to know why suicide occurs. This desire is embedded in the human psyche, not just for suicide, but for all of life's perplexing problems--especially those that are most painful. There is the belief that if one knows the reason WHY, then the HOW (the coping) can more readily function and facilitate healing.

Reasons and motives for suicide abound. Generally, these may be classified as:

1. No conscious motives, sub-intentioned, and often impulsive, as in the mentally deranged. (10%)
2. Mentally unstable with neurotic tendencies. Involves many motivations, justification, and rationalizations. (25%)
3. Action based on strong emotion, such as anger, extreme pain, rejection, hopelessness, guilt. Not psychotic. (40%)
4. Quiet and deliberate consideration based on reason and the pro's and con's of life and death. (25%)

In terms of the focus of this paper--i.e., the religious and psychical perspectives on suicide--the following are motivating factors:

1. Death--rebirth attitudes based on faith or fantasy.
2. Need to regress, to regenerate, to return to the womb, to the MAGNA MATER, to be reborn.
3. Not accepting the antinomy of life and death.
4. Acquiring or regaining love after death, rejoining the lost love object when the lost loved one carried all of the meaning of life, even though there is no concrete notion how the reunion will take place.

To Be Or Not To Be

5. End the present miserable life in order to start life again in a new incarnation.

6. Impulse to encounter absolute reality: e.g., to be one with God or to find Nirvana and a culmination of the life force which lies beyond this life.

7. Desire to experience pleasures on the other side (reaction to pleasurable clinical or near-death stories), death as the gate to gratification in the next life.

8. Attempt to destroy the present inner evil and achieve righteousness in the beyond.

9. Lovers' suicide pacts as an attempt to immortalize their love through joint death.

Where there is commitment to a vow or value (oblivious suicide) or whether the norms are pro suicide, i.e., life is subordinated to an ideal, the following are pertinent:

1. Passive surrender to deity.

2. Active self-offering to deity.

3. Ritualistic duty.

4. Heroic or altruistic suicide (martyr, patriot); life or individual less important than preservation of ideal.

5. Imitation, arising from collective resolve (group or mass suicide) or encouraged by suicide role models.

6. Belief in reincarnation, i.e., suicide is a necessary karmic response to a negative action in a previous lifetime.

Other motivating factors, each with a number of sub-headings, include cry for help, revenge, response to loss, escape, control, and pathological.

PROFILES OF SUICIDAL PERSONS. Based on years of research and much clinical data, professionals working in suicidology have been able to provide patterns and profiles for assessing suicide potentialities for attempted and completed suicide. These include the factors of health, age, life stages, family background, social interaction and religion. In terms of religion, the following apply:

1. In general, the more religious an individual or a community is, the lower the suicide potential or suicide rate. However, in cultures where there is a high level of social integration in which the

norms are pro suicide (often related to religion) suicide is more frequent.

2. Suicide rates for Protestants are higher than those for Jews which are higher than those for Roman Catholics. Suicide rates for white males in all three religious categories increase with age. There is not a similar noticeable increase for females.

3. The greater one's religious commitment, involvement and participation, the less likely suicide becomes (e.g., weekly attendance, committee and group activities).

4. Eschatology (concepts and attitudes toward death and life after death) is associated with suicidal outcome.

(In this table CS stands for completed suicide and AS stands for attempted suicide.)

A. CS more often than others see death as an escape from pain and suffering.

B. CS are less likely than AS to be frightened by death.

C. AS and CS are more likely than natural deaths to see death as revenge, as "nothingness", and to dream about death.

D. AS talk about death more often than CS.

E. Concerning belief in life continuing after death, there seem to be no significant differences among suiciders and nonsuiciders. Clinical death and near-death studies may change this difference.

PSYCHODYNAMICS OF SUICIDE. There is no complete or unitary psychological theory of suicide. Most therapists regard suicide as failure of adaptation and a desperate attempt to achieve readaptation. Psychotherapeutic approaches to suicide emphasize the multiple determinants and many possible motivations.

Each of the following categories indicate many of the major dynamics in suicide: failure of important ego functions; dependency; aggression and hostility; guilt and shame; anxiety; hopelessness; depression; biochemical; mental illness; spiritual.

Spiritual factors involve spiritual rebirth, regeneration, and reward.

1. Some persons with suicidal tendencies have unconscious longings for spiritual rebirth. Death is seen as death of the ego which, enveloped by conflict, has lost contact with the self and must return to the womb of MAGNA MATER to re-establish contact and be reborn. Death is a magic union with the Creator. Death is the great Rearranger.

2. The rebirth suicidal ideation can be closely related to hopelessness in which a dead-end consciousness prevails and life here has no meaning. Only through spiritual rebirth via death can meaning be regained.

3. Resentment and revenge may also play a part in the desire for spiritual rebirth. If resentment and revenge reach murderous proportions, and murderous rage is directed against the resented persons, suicide may be the way to prevent such a murderous act and the ensuing guilt, and allow for a new start in the afterlife free from resentment, rage, and thoughts of killing another.

4. The regeneration and reward concept may be related to religious, cultural, or traditional factors such as martyrdom and patriotic or sacrificial suicides.

RELIGIOUS AND PHILOSOPHICAL VIEWS ON SUICIDE. There is a consistent condemnatory consciousness concerning suicide that has existed throughout human history and still exists today in many quarters, religious and secular. Religious systems and thought, in western civilization, have generally condemned those who commit suicide and have spelled out their punishment in a variety of ways.

Suicides mentioned in the Bible are not censured per se. These are found in Judges 9:54 (Abimelech); Judges 16:27-30 (Samson); I Samuel 31-45 (Saul and his armor bearer); II Samuel 17: 23) (Ahithophel); I Kings 16: 18 (Zimri); Matthew 27:5 (Judas); II Maccabees 14: 42-46 (Razis).

Jewish creeds and documents affirm the value of life and generally indicate that normal burial rites for those who commit suicide be denied.

Early in the history of the Christian Church, suicide was condemned and still is today to a great extent. Biblical prohibitions for this position include the commandment against killing (Exodus 20-13); penalty for shedding blood (Genesis 9:5-6); and God's sovereignty over human life found throughout Scripture, especially in Genesis 1-3, Romans 14 7-12; and I Corinthians 6:19.

In Church writings, suicide is described as robbing God; desecration of holy property; desertion of one's divine post; murder; usurping the prerogatives of church and state; an act against nature, community, and God; an insult to human dignity; cowardly; rejection of God's will and detestable and damnable wickedness.

Most cultures in western civilization have viewed suicide as socially unacceptable. In other cultures (Asian, Indian, Eskimo) there is less censure of suicide and, in some cases, it is honored, expected or advised. Greek and Roman law, though not prohibiting suicide, generally regard suicide as an act against the state, depriving the state and

reducing its power. Under certain conditions, normal burial rites were denied and the victim's property was taken over by the state. Greek and Roman religions and philosophies varied in their views concerning suicide, but generally condemned the act as violence against the self. Platonic philosophy justified suicide in certain extremities (e.g., spiritual dishonor), but not to escape sickness, sorrow or responsibility. Death is the inevitable end of all flesh, but the deterioration of the body and the stresses of the mind do not justify physical destruction while life, opportunities and possibilities of self (soul) improvement remain. These opportunities and possibilities can provide insight and strength for self and others to face death with hope. The Stoic school sanctioned suicide by those who could not free themselves from dominating impulses of envy, cupidity, or debauchery.

Later western cultures, most likely due to the influence of the Christian Church, took a harsher attitude toward suicide, often regarding it as a crime and subjecting the corpse to mutilation, public defamation of the body, denial of usual burial rites, seizing the victim's estate and censure of the family. In the case of any attempted suicide, the act was regarded as a felony, later a misdemeanor. Survivors of a suicide pact, if one did the killing, or assisted were liable to the charge of manslaughter. In America, some of those laws and attitudes still exist, but are gradually being revised. Distinctions between censure and regret concerning suicide are being reviewed more realistically. These laws, attitudes, and treatments will probably continue to change as research on suicide continues.

Over the years, the laws and legal ramifications have reflected conflicting attitudes which epitomize many of the dilemmas concerning suicide. These attitudes include the humanistic concern versus moral condemnation; lack of clear convictions versus prejudgments; the willingness to accept the new subtleties and many determinants of human behavior versus the maintenance of traditional common sense and Common Law Practices. What is clear is that legal sanctions do not prevent suicide.

LIFE AFTER DEATH: PARANORMAL PERSPECTIVES. A deep concern of many who mourn a suicide is what is happening to their loved one now. This concern is based on a belief in life after death. Belief in life after death is important for the dying and for the living. The importance is not always acknowledged or overtly expressed, but belief in an after life has proved valuable for coping with death and grief and also for providing a framework out of which persons formulate many of their attitudes and styles for living.

One of the more dramatic areas of exploration of life after death is that of psychical research. Although largely ignored, criticized, or condemned by the scientific and religious communities, the findings of psychical researchers, and the large accumulation from many sources of anecdotal

material concerning the paranormal provide information on life after death that cannot be lightly dismissed. As work in this field progresses, important facts for the prevention, intervention and postvention of suicide might well be forthcoming.

Psychical research that deals with life after death includes the out-of-body experiences, apparitions, audible voice, reports from recent dead, reincarnation, possession survival codes, automatic writing, spirit-recorded voices, materialization and deathbed visions.

Of special interest is the near death experience concerning suicide attempts and completion. Although research data on NDE's concerning suicide are sparse, ambiguous and inconclusive, the data do indicate certain paranormal dynamics of the suicide attempt. Those who survive a suicide attempt and have an NDE undergo at least part of the so-called core experience which is described as a progression of events in which there is a feeling of peace, body separation (OBE), entering darkness, seeing light, and entering light. The core experience of the suicider does not get beyond the phase of entering the darkness, whereas other types of NDE's (accident, shock, illness) usually go through all of the phases. Thus, in the suicidal NDE, one does not encounter loved ones and transcendent beauty and light. The experience is truncated and aborted. Initially the suicidal NDE is one of relief and peace, but ends with confusion and a drifting toward a dark murky void. A feeling of being trapped or stuck may also accompany this descent into darkness. Of all the NDE's, the suicidal person's recall is the poorest. The nature of the total NDE of the suicidal person may also be qualified, or contaminated, by drugs, alcohol, or his psychiatric state.

Many who attempted suicide and had an NDE stated that they would not attempt suicide again. Some non-suicidal persons who had an NDE noted that it had been intimated to them that suicide is an unfortunate act which exacts a penalty.

On the other hand, since the non-suicidal NDE presents some attractive features concerning life after death and frequently diminishes the fear of dying, this fact may encourage suicide. There are cases of persons who, in great anguish (physical or mental illness, prison), when hearing of persons describing their pleasant NDE's, actually were moved to suicide. In addition, some researchers report that those who attempt suicide and have an NDE come out with a real sense of purpose in their lives and find life more meaningful. This corresponds to information noted in some attempted suicides in which there was apparently no NDE. In these cases, the attempters said that, in the process of the attempt, (e.g., jumping from a high bridge) they experienced mystical states of consciousness characterized by losing a sense of time and space and by feelings of spiritual return and unity with other human beings, the universe, and God;

and also a profound religious conversion, reconfirmation or reinforcement of their religious beliefs.

Findings by parapsychologists, psychical researchers and others who claim to have communicated or in some way had contact with the person after death do not reveal entirely consistent patterns or conclusions concerning the after-death-state of suicide victims, although there is much consensus. Most information indicates states of turmoil, fear, struggle, confusion, regret, pain, darkness and an intensification of the psychical torments that drove the victim to suicide. The suicide is described as an interruption and set-back. It is seen as distorted aggression and a result of not using or not understanding natural pathways of communicating with and relating to others.

The suicide is regarded as a rejection of the soul's will and its plan for a life pattern. It is a premature foreclosure on life. Those who commit suicide destroy the physical vehicle, but do not fulfill the years of their destiny. Suicide is thus antagonistic to the law of life which is instituted and controlled by God, and one has no right to interfere with the operation of the law. It is a breach of spiritual ethics and one must pay a price for such an act. Suicidal persons are chained to every consequence of their act.

Many suicide victims in their communications from the other side advised against suicide, regretting their act and indicated that, given the opportunity, would never repeat it.

Much of the information states that suicide victims say that they experience a feeling of being trapped and of not escaping or reaching a solution to their earthly problems which now have to be worked out on the other side. They feel suspended between the world of the living and the world of the dead. They are the "undead." Having failed to finish their physical life's plan, they haunt their former environments (earthbound spirit) and remain in this suspected state for the length of time that they would have lived had they remained in the physical body. This suspended state of suicidal persons is described as more painful than a nonsuicidal earthbound spirit state. For those who commit suicide cannot enter into the rhythmic formulas of purgatory or cleansing in the same manner as those who have died from other causes. Suicidal victims are thus more impervious to the healing energies and helpful influences of the prayers and love of others.

Reports note that suicide causes trauma and grief for numerous persons and, therefore, suicidal persons have to make amends not only to everyone they love, but also to those they hardly know. Those who commit suicide can see the misery caused by their act, but cannot communicate their regret or their pleas for forgiveness to those whom they have hurt by committing suicide.

need to work through their renounced responsibilities--a difficult task.

Suicide is regarded as an insult to human dignity. Suicidal persons inflict suffering on others, abandon loved ones, renege on responsibilities, thwart contributions that they can make to the well-being of society, erode the structures and strictures against the taking of life, and offend God by relegating to themselves the prerogatives of the Divine. Those who strike themselves strike the God within. Suicide is a rejection of the soul's will and plan for life's pattern, a denying of one's destiny and a defaulting on life.

All of these factors add to the gravity of the suicide victim's distress and to the distress of loved ones and society at large. However, there are possibilities for renewal and hope for the victim and for the bereaved.

In summary, psychical research and paranormal phenomena affirm that suicide is a dangerous and unfortunate way to enter the other side of human existence. This corresponds to most religious and philosophical views. On-going studies of life after death may help to clarify the picture, and hopefully deter some suicides and help surviving loved ones in their grief.

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THE NEW AGE MYTH OF SALVATION

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After asserting that in this context "myth" will be interpreted as providing new perspectives on the meaning of salvation, the author discusses three traditional but also contemporary concepts pertaining to salvation, those of (1) transformation, (2) intervention from a "higher sphere," and (3) a vision of global unity.

INTRODUCTION: THE MEANING OF NEW AGE, MYTH, AND SALVATION. The New Age, I believe, embraces the present expanding interest in new ideas now coming to the fore of science, philosophy, religion, and the study of their implications for more meaningful living. This is an intentionally broad definition. It is also intentionally a positive interpretation, ignoring cries of blasphemy and fraud heard in fundamentalist and some other quarters of society. The New Age seems to be to be a response to personal and public hunger for a more challenging level of insight, a groping for new and worthier values, along with the understandable bewilderment common to major transition periods and fast widening horizons.¹

As for myths, they are not just stories. In our time, we are moving away from regarding myths as entertaining fabrications.² The combined influence of 20th century scholars from different backgrounds has led us to seeing various levels of truth in myths. The theosophist Geoffrey Hodson, the religionist Robert Ellwood, philosopher Manly P. Hall, students of Greek symbolism Robert Graves and Paul Diel, psychoanalyst Carl Jung--these are among those who have taught us to take myths seriously.³ Their work created the prolific popularity of Mircea Eliade and Joseph Campbell.⁴

The Dictionary of All Scriptures and Myths treats sacred literature and myths alike as one field arising out of divine, not human, inspiration.⁵ The scriptures are extensions of myths, and cloaked in the same symbolic language. For as the Hebrew scholar Raphael Patai points out, definitions of myth are diverse, but all unite in sensing that they hold an inner truth.⁶

If we find convincing the contentions of contemporary observers, we have to know that we are living in the full swing of a knowledge and consciousness revolution which is either dislocating or actually uprooting ideas fixed in our thinking for some 300 years.⁷ Stories in myths offer us the kind of explanation, rationalization, and meaning we seek for making life's vicissitudes bearable. If an individual or a society becomes mythless, then meaning, the individual, and the society are all lost. Fortunately, we have new myths of salvation in the process of formulation; the idea of an inbuilt transformative principle; an affirmation and acceptance of total interdependence displacing the old, flawed independence ideal; newly recognized powers in na-

The New Age Myth of Salvation

ture, including humans; and a growingly insistent rejection of negative and other limiting factors. In the evolving conceptualization we have both metaphysical and practical themes abundantly represented, side by side, and recognized as legitimate avenues of exploration. As yet we cannot discern the probable future mix of these elements in a new myth of salvation, but the vision is taking shape. We will not continue as a mythless society.⁸

About that inbuilt psychic urge that keeps mankind ever trying, ever producing the new visions that are gradually conceptualized in new combinations of symbols, much is being written. I see the New Testament Logos, the Quaker's Inner Light, and theosophy's Fohat as kin to this concept. In modern times it is to Kazantzakis' the Cry; to Campbell, the call; for Westman it was the hayah; Gopi Krishna could have recognized it, and many others do, in Kundalini. Recently McWaters has adopted the popular modern style and identified the psychic urge as ETA, the Evolutionary Transformative Agents (not precisely ascribed to various New Age sources.⁹ It is part of the mythologem of salvation to have a basic sense of this drive, however vaguely defined, and an idea of the way to actualize it in our lives.

In the centuries following the lifetimes of Gautama and Jesus, salvation as a chief theme of both Buddhist and Christian myth wore changing guises. There was salvation from something--damnation, misery, destruction, and salvation for something--happiness, immortality, or triumph over evil, perhaps just survival. In this century there has been an atmosphere of urgency gathering around the concept of salvation since Hiroshima in the 1940's. I want to argue that we are now seeing a shift of emphasis from the idea of rescue from something to a concept of salvation for a better future. New perceptions of what salvation is and how to attain it are a hallmark of the New Age. The general direction seems to be on growth through learning, and the new myth sees a higher humanity emerging, informed, resourceful, and responsible.¹⁰ I think we can see examples in three overlapping clusters of concepts:

1. Our planet and species are in a transformation process which holds the potential of an ever better future.

2. For problems which we have so far found unsolvable, special help is available to us from another sphere.

3. A rising vision of global unity is leading us into a new conceptualization of what human can and should do.

1. TRANSFORMATION. The concept of evolution, scientific fact according to some, is by others being looked upon as a myth rivaling that of creation for unlikelihood. In its mythic meaning, evolution is not merely physical. We look back on old myths and see that the real reason Adam and

Eve were expelled from the Garden was to permit mankind's further evolution by keeping early human forms from eating of the Tree of Life, and thus remaining fixed in their primitive stage of development.¹¹ The famous Fall in the symbolic view was from a bodiless state into a dense material form so that human development could proceed simultaneously on three planes.¹² Thus, the concept of transformation or self-transcendence is associated with an array of challenges to go beyond the physical sense into a higher realization of some kind. In particular, meditation, yoga, cultivation of psychic powers are among ways to transcend ordinary existence, and realize a higher consciousness often thought of as spirituality. The idea here is that we are in essence spiritual beings whose fulfillment is in learning who we are and what we can become.

The process has to begin with release by both body and mind of all negatives. We saw the confrontational movement become popular in the 1970's. But cognitive therapy, desensitization and affirmation are other techniques widely gaining recognition.¹³ Related are alternative healing and well-known support groups such as Alcoholics Anonymous, symbols of transformation on more than one level of consciousness. Further, the ancient myth of reincarnation gives the modern challenge of transformation an extended time in which to work out, as well as an ultimate escape from failures along the way. Working in conjunction with the concept of karma, the reincarnation myth makes sense of our present situation and gives us assurance that no effort is wasted, however futile it looks, and at the same time warns us that the books eventually have to be balanced--by us. Past life regression, whatever we may think of it, is bound to have an appeal

The whole consciousness movement is calling public attention to extraordinary innate powers of the human being, known but only narrowly exploited for centuries. The time has come to tap these powers, to empower ourselves. We do not need a talisman such as a magic ring or gem; our treasure is within us, in higher sense perception, and maybe in hitherto known additional senses, waiting to be unlocked.

A superb example is the present interest in kundalini arousal, or the raising of an inner energy from its hiding place at the base of the spine to the crown of the head. The kundalini discussion now going on is both controversial and confused. We hear claims that the high instrument for the evolution of our species is this activated kundalini energy and the changes it effects. Thus an ancient concept within Hinduism and Buddhism has become a prominent modern symbol of human progress.¹⁴

Another example is the concept of the mind-body connection, in which a growing body of evidence is leading us to believe that our attitudes, even our unconscious world view, can determine what happens to us. As in the case of kundalini, it has an actual physiological base which it is contended will be conclusively demonstrated in the laboratory.

The New Age Myth of Salvation

Already we have a large enough base of descriptions of the physical body's millions of cells with their individual missions, the intricate neurological network of connections between the brain and the physical response, so that tentative predictions are being made about the future of medicine.¹⁵ For so many years the popular media have been publicizing warnings about, and remedies for, stress that at least a verbal awareness has entered the public mind.

Then the pendulum started a reverse swing which has echoes now. As far back as 1983, the noted physician Larry Dossey called the fitness fad the pursuit of a fantasy,-- a myth, though he did not use that word. From an article he wrote in 1983, this excerpt is arresting:

We need to go beyond this naive notion of health. Ironically, when we renounce our preoccupation with health--the maniacal drive to possess or acquire it--the stage is set for becoming healthier. There is a sense of letting go that is important, and we can frequently realize healthiness by ceasing to strive to acquire it--for anxiety about health, anxiety about anything, has been shown to be a factor in promoting illness.¹⁶

The sequel finds expression in 1989 in Merry Browne's statement which S.F.F.I. had permission to copy in its Jan., 1990 Newsletter. I quote the last two of three paragraphs:

Character reformation will be the therapy of psychology and psychiatry which will be the medicine of the future. All that will remain of general medicine will be a required balanced life of work-rest-recreation-good diet-exercise-and moderation in all things.

General and surgical medicine will continue until man makes the necessary changes in himself to eliminate need for them. Thus shall the next decade begin to usher in the true New Age of Enlightenment.¹⁷

A pervasive theme in many classical myths is the magical power of unselfish devotion. Hansel and Gretel were able to survive by their devotion to each other. Beauty was able by her unconditional love to transform the Beast. We grew up on such stories. But in the New Age this myth surfaces in an adaptation of the Oriental concept of non-attachment, and this is giving us a third example of transformation as a way to salvation. Though we are hedged in with hazards of every sort, we can be more nearly invincible if we keep ourselves free from identification with the fruits of our actions. Thus we avoid the emotional cancers of disappointment, on the one hand, or guilt, on the other. Rather than acting for the sake of anticipated results, we act for the sake of doing what seems to be right and therefore worth doing for its own sake.

"The Kind Man" is the title of a Tibetan folk tale which has a slant on this concept. A generous, beloved and much admired man asked a famous lama how he could attain enlightenment, and spent 20 years praying in solitude as advised. But when the lama told him after that time that he was sorry: it would not work and the quest was hopeless, the disappointed kind man gave it up. But he went on praying anyway, and only then achieved his goal.¹⁸

Willis Harman's practical adaptation of this concept is contained in his remarkable Global Mind Change. In place of our traditional concept of failure, he suggests, we need to substitute the concept of feedback, applied alike to success and failure. For feedback teaches and points the way to proceed, whereas the traditional assessment crushes or misleads us as to further action. Harman's belief in the New Age and the significant shift in perceptions taking place now leads him to predict that "...society will, only a few generations from now, be as different from modern industrial society as that is from society of the Middle Ages."¹⁹

On the horizon is still another approach to transforming ourselves. This is the personalization of the myth idea, which may turn out to be mythology's contemporary function. Each of us, we are told, is the hero of several personal myths deeply imbedded in our subconscious. If we will discover what our own myths are, and their origins in our early experiences, we can go on to sort out the disturbing contradictions among them and work out mature integration that will support our continuing growth rather than impede it.

"Personal myths," says the writer of a very recent self-help book on this theme, "explain the world, guide personal development, provide social direction, and address spiritual longings in a manner that is analogous to the way cultural myths carry out those functions for entire societies."²⁰ The author treats personal myths as clusters of conceptualizations related to some central idea, and considers that each individual holds several of these clusters and acts on them without awareness.

Somewhat parallel to the personalization of myth is a new concept of the final goal of transformation. Although heaven (paradise, or nirvana) has been pictured traditionally as a marvelous place of unending bliss, to the sophisticated the concept has become more a matter of status rather than of locus. In other words, the conception of heaven is undergoing transformation to a state of mind. The new myth says that we can be there right now; only a change of attitudes or beliefs is required. For heaven is within us and we can choose to be there. Just as Dorothy had to learn from her encounter with the Wizard of Oz, what we are seeking is within us. "What you need is What You've Got," and "Taking Charge of Your own Life" are apt book titles in the context of this insight.²¹

2. INTERVENTION FROM A HIGHER SPHERE. The myth of sal-

vation from outside ourselves has many images in modern society. After being pushed into relative obscurity by the scientific revolution, the beloved invisible world of the ancients has acquired new respectability. When mortal affairs get out of hand, intervention by some supernatural power has been the fondest of mythologems.

The savior may be a prince who kisses a bewitched heroine, or a selfless maiden who releases the enchanted prince. It may be a dream like Jung's of the House which was his own psyche,²² or that of Zimmer's poor rabbi who traveled many miles on foot to learn that buried treasure lay under the dirt floor of his own hut.²³ Giant figures of the Old and New Testaments, the Koran, and both Eastern and Western sacred writings, had direct access to their aspects of this invisible world, and now we are getting it back.

A stunning transformation of the myths surrounding Jesus, for example, has resulted in a changed conception of Jesus the man. Some 20th century versions introduce the idea that Jesus was widely traveled and highly trained in existing mystery schools from Egypt to India.²⁴ Others affirm that his personality was overshadowed, merged with that of a higher being to carry out a benevolent mission. The Urantia Book published in 1955 has a whole cosmic mythology rivaling that of the Secret Doctrine for abstruseness. Urantia makes Jesus the apex world figure in a long evolution of religious leadership and conceptualization, and tells its students it is time to understand and follow the model religion of Jesus, rather than what has developed as a religion about Jesus.²⁵

Krishna appeared in the Bhagavad Gita to rescue Arjuna, and stated that he would always reappear when civilization was faltering.²⁶ Buddha takes endless incarnations, according to some, in order to save the people, and in one story was himself the beneficiary of special intervention. In this story the Buddha was a king named Mahasudassana. The king's help was in the form of a vision. He saw the flaming Wheel of the Law, the omen of a world-ruler. By following the Wheel with his army, Mahasudassana received the immediate reverence of all his former enemies. This was because the Wheel of the Law activated the chakras as they were identified with the elements of perfection needed by a ruler of the world.²⁷ The overlap here with 20th century ideas of the chakras is attractive, and it contributes to the confusion in the discussion of kundalini.

There will probably be messiah myths as long as mortal man survives. For over 2000 years Jews have looked for their messiah. A chapter entitled "Preexistence and Names of the Messiah" in Raphael Patai's Messiah Texts gives an account of a brief meeting with a leper messiah, to which the narrator was guided by the horse which was drawing his cart. Afterwards the narrator explained the brevity of the meeting: "...as it is known, there is a Messiah in every generation in This World, in reality, clothed in a body. And if the generation is worthy, he is ready to reveal himself; and if,

God forbid, they are not worthy, he departs..."²⁸

When Jesus disappointed the Jewish hope, they did not give up, but even in diaspora continued to believe their Messiah would appear. Shabbatai Zevi was a peak of hope in the 17th century, but Jews were disillusioned when this hero under pressure went over to Islam.²⁹ In our own century the coming of a Maitreya or World Teacher was an enormously popular concept attached to J. Krishnamurti until he rejected it.

Both the Buddha and the Jesus myths are at work among us now. Here I will cite a version of each, with the note that there are also others.

The Buddha has the power to give instant guarantee of admission to heaven through the "new" Japanese religion of Sokagakkai.³⁰ Derived from the teachings of the 13th century monk Nichiren, but only in the second half of this century becoming internationally active, this movement sees us living in a 10,000-year period of general deterioration and demoralization. We can pull out of this by a rigorous devotion to the Buddha and his teaching. The program calls for regular chanting of the text of the Lotus Sutra, accompanied by strict observation in our daily lives of everyday virtues like promptness, cleanliness, and fulfilling obligations in service to others. Doing these things, members of Sokagakkai are counting on the Buddha to save the U.S. along with themselves.

The rest of the world will share in the salvation Jesus will bring us in his reappearance as the Maitreya, expected to be revealed early in the 1990's. Artist Benjamin Creme of London has devoted the last 35 years of his life to this proclamation.³¹ His conception is a remarkable combination of two mythic strands: the new intervention is an incarnation in a living man, and at the same time it is the individual perception of a universal principle abiding in the innate divinity of every person. The human incarnation is a humble East Indian who came to England from the Himalayas and is living now in the Asian quarter of London. Though he affects our lives only by our consent, he is giving certain individuals positive "experiences: and leading them to seek the new vision. At the same time this new vision puts humanity in touch with its essential nature as one family as creatures of essential good will, and as builders of a new world order. Thus both inner and outer saving forces converge toward that greater ideal which Creme expresses in his motto: SHARE AND SAVE THE WORLD.

Creme's concept seems much like a derivative of the theosophical salvation myth introduced to the West in the 1880's. Here we have a grand overlay of ancient messiah myths with spiritualist, Buddhist, and other concepts on helpful intervention. Theosophists predicate great Brotherhoods of perfected men keeping watch over the human race to guide it, when called upon, to find the right path.³² It is to be noted that these Masters or Mahatmas, unlike Jesus,

are thought of as men, not God. Thus, we see the weaving together of different mythic strands. The Russian founder of the Theosophical Society, Madame Helena Blavatsky, was chosen to be the direct messenger of the Mahatmas, as were to a lesser degree her American colleagues W.Q. Judge and H.S. Olcott, followed by several other claimants.³³ We are only too familiar with the present picture of self-proclaimed channelers, who have been assuring us of the other world's love and benevolent desires for us, and the way we should go to realize them. We are practically besieged by witnesses, now that not only we human have guardian angels but also members of the plant and other worlds have theirs. The miracle stories are colorful, and myths carry inner truth, as their definitions insist!

3. A VISION OF GLOBAL UNITY. In our time the concept of unity of all that exists may well become the main symbol of the New Age myth of salvation. There are those who insist that this ideal of unity is in no way mythical, but a cold hard fact of our time,--crucial indeed to our very survival as a species. But partly it is also a rebellion against the consumerism and the comfort addiction of industrial society.

This expanding aspect of the concept of unity has more contemporary expression than mythic precedent. Around us a growing crowd of exponents is rising. A main manifestation is certainly the contention that the whole human species is one, regardless of racial, national, religious, and sex divisions.

Benjamin Creme is championing this idea with his concern for the Third World. The whole modern scheme of materialistic, sliding values is off base, Creme says. Yet we have to pave the way for salvation by seeing to it that material needs for food, water, and shelter are universally satisfied. He does not subscribe to the New Testament myth that the poor will always be with us, regardless of what we do, or to the capitalists' comfortable assumption that there will always be unemployment.³⁴

Willis Harman of the I.O.N.S. has another concept of unity: he spells out the concept of practical global consciousness as the power to shape our future. Harman believes this is the way to the world peace essential to the solution of our macroproblems. We can choose a metaphysical outlook which posits an embracing wholeness. Then we can bring about peace by withdrawing legitimacy from violence, just as public executions and dueling were delegitimized in the past and smoking is undergoing the same process now.³⁵

The myth of human oneness is developing enough of a following even now to suggest that its inner truth may become outer truth as well. There are other Hunger projects besides Creme's, and a host of publications. Religious groups take an active role. The Friends World Committee for Consultation has a section on the Right Sharing of World Resources. The Harmonic Convergence movement was hailed as a new venture in mobilizing consciousness and previously the

popular "Close Encounters of the Third Kind" prepared the way. The Transcendental Meditation group and its university in Iowa fully hold to the thought that a substantial fraction of the population of any nation or of the world could swing the thinking of the whole into new channels.

By this time it may have been forgotten, so fast have changes been building up, that one of the Iran hostages wrote a book after his release in 1981, calling for a new kind of thinking in the U.S., and that he actually proposed a program for suiting action to the words.³⁶ Since then other projects have come forward. An organization called Global Exchange was formed in 1988 to bridge the international gap between rich and poor,³⁷ and others will continue to put out the same challenge.

Psychologist Michael Grosso, writing in the *Spiritual Frontiers Quarterly Journal* of spring, 1989, talked about the power of group dynamics. Grosso referred to both the popular New Age myth of the hundredth monkey, attributed to the English biologist Lyall Watson, and Rupert Sheldrake's myth of "morphic resonance." I think the following excerpt from Grosso's conclusion is worth repeating in 1990:

...Indeed, to any one who, like myself, has been monitoring the world of psychic phenomena, reports of UFO revelations, prophetic near-death visions, appearance of the Virgin Mary, the ever growing mass of channelling phenomena, it is clear that a single message, a single pattern of information is emerging...[T]he very singleness, the repetitiveness of the message, indicates it is coming from the depths of the species mind. The message, in plain language, seems to be this: realize a new solidarity of the human spirit, a new planetary basis for human identity, find the place with ourselves, which is above political, religious, and philosophical creeds.³⁸

We might well add here, what Campbell told Moyers: "The only myth that is going to be worth talking about in the immediate future is one that is talking about the planet and everybody on it."³⁹ We can emend this to read: Everyone and also every life form on the planet. The myth of the future will have to be one that is solidly anchored in maturing concepts of consciousness.

To be sure, outreach to other levels of existence than the human is well established in mythic tradition. The idea of a level of consciousness in everything that exists was advanced in The Secret Doctrine by H.P. Blavatsky a hundred years ago as a fundamental tenet of theosophy. Now Lovelock's hypotheses urges us to consider that Gaia, our Earth itself, is also a part of nature with its own consciousness as a planet which is in its own stage of evolution, and requires human respect.

With other manifestations of life, past mythic tradi-

The New Age Myth of Salvation

tion has always reflected interaction, at least, if not always respect. Savior dolphins were heroes way back at least as far as Roman literature, and there are current rescue reports.⁴⁰ G.B. Shaw in his Methusaleh went so far as to represent the Serpent in the Garden of Eden as an outstanding benefactor to mankind. The Jordan River cured the leper Naaman (II Kings 5:1, 9-14). In the Russian legend of the Frog Princess the lady's rescue was achieved only by the synchronized efforts of a bear, a duck, a rabbit, a fish, and the renowned Russian symbol, a hut-on-chicken legs in which lived the wise witch.

Even God had need of help from a bee and a hedgehog, according to an old Transylvanian myth about the sequel of creation.⁴¹ When God had caused dry land to surface out of the waters, the land proceeded to expand so fast that there was soon going to be no room for any water at all. Not knowing what to do, God sent the bee to ask the hedgehog who knew everything. But as the latter refused to answer on the ground that God is omniscient, the bee tricked the hedgehog to get the answer and passed it back: God was to form mountains and valleys and then the water would have plenty of room.

Now, in an interesting reversal, our relationships are shifting emphasis to communicating with other worlds of nature. We are moving closer to them, fashioning some degree of unity with them. With our energy we help plants to grow. With our thoughts we influence flies to abandon our houses through open doors. By skillful concentration we communicate with troublesome underground springs and streams, locate invisible but needed oil and water resources, exchange messages with rodents and other pests, and even with the pain symptoms in our own bodies. And these are not all! Stories of leap-frog with automobiles have been appearing in the Spiritual Frontiers Quarterly.

Dora Kunz, psychic and teacher of therapeutic touch, makes communication with trees and brooks an integral part of her course. The mythic Trees of Knowledge and Life in Eden have been joined recently by the Tree "for healing the nations" on a remote island in the South Seas.⁴² The leaves of this tree heal body, mind, and soul permanently, but only a few find the tree. Most think it is a figment of imagination--a myth. No one ever takes its leaves home to share, for their magic property lasts but for an hour, and then the leaves rot away. Though few in number, however, the "knowers of the Tree" are so healthy and happy, they feed the unity of the people, bringing a new spirit to their communities.

Meanwhile, let us pause on the word unity. The word is in danger of becoming as fuzzy and subjective as the word love. So many ideas are attached to the idea of unity, that we will come to wonder what it really means. There is unity of matter with energy and consciousness, of object and subject, outer and inner unity, unity of man with nature. Now are added: unity of an underlying core of reality in the un-

iverse; unity of all manifestation as the expression of universal consciousness, unity of all men, women, and children, and unity of the individual "I" with universalized consciousness.⁴³ Sometimes it seems to me that the clearest meaning of that other word love comes through to us in some of our myths. Maybe our New Age myths will also clarify the reality of unity in the fullness of time ahead.

CONCLUSION. I believe we have to concede that our New Age mythology has to forge new conceptions. That of salvation, for a significant example, is less about saving us from anything and more about fitting us for a new experience of living. When the imaginative Greek writer Kazantzakis said nearly forty years ago: "...to be saved means finding a new justification for life, for the old ones have vented their strength and can no longer support the human edifice," he could have been talking about the New Age myth of salvation.⁴⁴

We begin to understand that we are co-creators of the universe, and we are heeding that deep inner drive to creativity, to hearing the Call, or the Cry, or seeing our Inner Light, or sensing our Bliss, as our perception makes us aware. On the trail of consciousness, unity, globalism, and other key terms, we will be like the 400 delegates to the first international conference on Consciousness within Science, in Feb., 1990 in San Francisco.⁴⁵ We will not agree but will follow many ways: kundalini for some, yoga for others, religion, the quest for messiahs, or psychic powers. Perhaps myths in the making will furnish some guideposts.

At present the New Age myths are just beckonings. Only foreshadowed can we see that "new justification for life" in a new human goal much greater than self-fulfillment, leading us inward toward a spiritual realization. A higher humanity: this is the New Age myth of salvation.

Bibliographical data for these end-notes are provided in the bibliography which follows.

¹See such different perspectives as Marilyn Ferguson's Aquarian Conspiracy (1980) and John Naisbitt's Megatrends (1982). Also Renee Weber, "The Good, the True, and the Beautiful: Are They Attributes of the Universe?" in American Theosophist, Jan., 1977, and interview with G. Cerminarao on her book Insights for the Age of Aquarius and Paul Kienewicz, "The New Age of Science", both in American Theosophist, Feb., 1977. John White, "Jesus and the Idea of a New Age." (Quest, summer, 1989) says, "in its best aspect, the New Age Movement aims at manifesting a new mode of being: a radically transformed world inhabited by a new humanity."

²"The most prevalent meaning for myth is, in fact, attractive fiction, tempting but unprovable." This typical definition (from Stephen Larsen in The Shaman's Doorway) is largely discredited since the 1980's.

³See Hodson, Hidden Wisdom in the Holy Bible, Vol. I and Concealed Wisdom in World Mythologies; Ellwood, Many Peoples, Many Faiths; Hall,

Orders of the Quest (1976) and Healing, The Divine Art (1972); Graves, The Greek Myths (1957); Diel, Symbolism in Greek Mythology (1980, Engl. translation); Jung, Memories, Dreams, and Reflections (1965); An arresting discussion of Jung's conceptualization, with several references to this book is by Stephen Hoeller, Jung and the Lost Gospels (1989).

⁴See especially Eliade, Myths, Dreams, and Mysteries (Eng. trans. 1960): "There is no myth which is not the unveiling of a 'mystery', the revelation of a primordial event which inaugurated either a constituent structure of reality or a kind of human behavior." (p. 16). See also, Joseph Campbell, Myths to Live By (1973) and The Mythic Image (1974) and Campbell and Moyers, The Power and Myth (1988). See also, B. Bruteau, "The Finite and the Infinite" in Quest, summer, 1989. p. 64ff.

⁵G.A. Gaskell, Dictionary of All Scriptures and Myths. p. 6-7, 12ff.

⁶R. Patai, The Messiah Texts (1979) has this statement: "All serious students of myth always use the term in the sense of a story possessed of a deep inner truth for those who believe in it. There are many definitions of myth, but the belief in its truth is always part of them." (p. xlix)

⁷Challenges to positivist and other reductionist thinking are no longer novel. See M. Ferguson, Aquarian Conspiracy (1980); W. Harman, Global Mind Change, (1988); W. Harman and H. Reingold (1984) Higher Creativity; E. T. Clark, Jr., "Believing is Seeing" Quest, Autumn, 1988. S. Hawking, A Brief History of Time (chapter 1) gives a survey of changing perspectives in science. Cf. Mary Scott, A Renaissance of the Spirit (1988).

⁸Diel, Op. Cit., p. 3-23

⁹Kazantzakis, Report To Greco. (Eng. trans., 1965) p. 291, 416, 421; Campbell, An Open Life, p. 23; Westman, Structure of Biblical Myths, passim., especially p 31, 147-154); Gopi Krishna, The Wonder of the Brain (posthumously publ, 1987) and Evolution: The Evolutionary Energy in Man (India, 1967); Book of John, I:1-4. The Famous phrase of George Fox was, "...that of God in every man." See also, Secret Doctrine (1979): Vol. I: 16, III, Vol. II: 400, f.n.

¹⁰See, J. White, Op. Cit., p. 22; Westman, Op. Cit., passim., but esp., p. 2, 37, 51, 68-9, 278; The Urantia Book p. 1076, 1086-7, section on "The Real Nature of Religion" p. 1104, 1117, 2051, 2083, 2090. Anne Lemkow in The Wholeness Principle integrates religious and scientific insights.

¹¹Genesis 3:22-24

¹²This is a basic tenet of theosophy. See Secret Doctrine: II: passim. e.g., 46, 68, 87

¹³Popular books like Michael Weiner's Maximum Immunity (1866) and Paul Pearsall's Super Immunity (1987) are being supplemented by research reports from the Institute of Noetic Sciences and by articles in New England Journal of Medicine and Johns Hopkins Wellness Letter.

¹⁴Kundalini, Evolution, and Enlightenment ed. by J. White (1979, 1990)

reflects the controversial aspects of these topics. See, Gopi Krishna, Kundalini for the New Age (1988); Marish Johari, Chakras, Energy Centers of Transformation (1987); Ajit Mookerjee, Kundalini, The Arousal of Inner Energy (1982); Swami Sivananda Radha, Kundalini Yoga for the West (1978); Lilian Silburn, Kundalini, The Energy of the Depths (1988).

¹⁵See Bull. and Newsletters of the Institute of Noetic Sciences, 475 Gate Five Rd., Sausalito, CA 94965

¹⁶"The Future of Medicine." American Theosophist, special fall issue, 1983

¹⁷Neither context nor identification of the writer was given.

¹⁸The story is in Tibetan Folk Tales (Theosophical Society Library, Wheaton, IL 60189).

¹⁹Harman, Global Mind Change, p. 168

²⁰Feinstein and Krippner, Personal Mythology, p. 24. The Theosophical Society, Wheaton, IL has produced a study source which is worked out from another angle: Joy Mills, The Myths of Our Lives: A Way to Personal Transformation (1990)

²¹L. Althouse (1989) and E. Wood (1985)

²²Jung, Memories, Dreams, Reflections. p. 158-162

²³Quoted in Eliade, Myths, Dreams, and Mysteries from H. Zimmer whose source was Martin Buber's Khassidischen Bucher

²⁴Janet Bock, The Jesus Mystery; Levi, The Aquarian Gospel of Jesus the Christ; Urantia Book, Part IV, p. 1323-2097; Nicolas Notovich, The Unknown Life of Jesus Christ; J. Furst, Edgar Cayce's Story of Jesus; Swami Paramananda, Christ and Oriental Ideals; C.F. Potter, The Lost Years of Jesus Revealed; J.G. Williams, Yeshua Buddha.

²⁵Urantia Book, p. 2051, 2059

²⁶Bhagavadgita, IV: 7-8

²⁷American Theosophist, fall special issue, 1973

²⁸See p. 31, Chap. 2

²⁹Patai, Messiah Texts, p. 33-36

³⁰Masaharu Anesaki, Nichiren the Buddhist Prophet; Ellwood, Op. Cit., p. 203-208; J.W White, The Sokagakkai and Mass Society.

³¹Share International produced in Amsterdam, London, and Los Angeles, is co-edited by Creme. It always has a summary of his conception of his mission, from 1959, presented to the public since 1974. Creme's books include The Reappearance of the Christ and the Masters of Wisdom (1980) and Maitreya's Mission (date?)

³²Most of the literature on these focuses on the Tibetan Brotherhood. See A.P. Sinnett, The Occult World and The Mahatma Letters, ed. by A.T. Barker (1932 and later ed.); Letters from Masters of the Wisdom, ed. by Jinarajadasa, 1919 and 1925.

³³E.g., C.W. Leadbeater, Alice A. Bailey, and Jane Roberts. The list is growing, and the material transmitted usually contains theosophical content published first in the 1870's and 1880's; but there are notable exceptions such as Oahspe and Urantia. Sources may be named or unnamed, and may or may not be identifiable historical figures.

³⁴See "The Threshold of Rebirth," "A Task for Us All," and "Evolutions and Isms" in Share International, March, 1990

³⁵Harman builds a strong case in Chapter 5 and 6 in Global Mind Change.

³⁶The book was The Ayatollah in the Cathedral by hostage Moorhead Kennedy.

³⁷Founded by Medea Benjamin and Andrea Freedman, co-authors of Bridging the Global Gap.

³⁸This point is more fully developed in Dr. Grosso's The Final Choice (1986).

³⁹Campbell, The Power of Myth, p. 32

⁴⁰E.g., "Natural Compassion" in Spiritual Frontiers, Jan., 1988

⁴¹A gypsy moth recounted in Eliade, Zalmoxis, The Vanishing God, comparative study of religions and folklore.

⁴²MSS materials from Builders of the Adytum (BOTA), p. T189. BOTA is an American mystery school founded on the Kabala.

⁴³Renee Weber, "Unity and Integrity" in the special centenary Theosophist, Adyar, India, April-May, 1983.

⁴⁴Kazantzakis, Op. Cit., p. 416. George Trevelyan, Vision of the Aquarian Age, says, "A new age is being born and a new society is forming, composed of those who have found within themselves the power of light and love. The spiritual within man unites with the spiritual in the cosmos, and out of this union a new order begins to crystallize." p. 20-21

⁴⁵Reported by the Mind-Being Foundation in April, 1990 (Bob Shacklett).

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